

PlayStation®

Official Magazine - Australia

SEPTEMBER ISSUE 2009
100% Australian Content



CALL OF DUTY

MODERN WARFARE 2

How 2009's biggest game goes above and beyond!



OFFICIAL VERDICT

ASHES CRICKET 2009

Welcome back here to the MCG, or the Gabba, or the WACA...

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

FIFA 10

FIRST DETAILS

MAD MAX

Max Payne 3:
The hard-boiled hero returns!

Hands-on: Behind the scenes with the best sports game in the world!

ISSUE 34 SEPTEMBER 2009
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RED DAWN

HOMEFRONT

Comms in the kitchen, from the writer of Apocalypse Now!

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• Lost Planet 2 • DJ Hero • Guitar Hero
Greatest Hits • Darksiders • The Saboteur
• Army of Two: The 40th Day • Sacred 2:
Fallen Angel • Split/Second and more!

BLU-RAY TOP 100, THE BEST CO-OP & THE WORST PS3 GAME EVER!



Wolfenstein™

19TH AUGUST 2009



PLAYSTATION 3



Games for Windows



XBOX 360

XBOX LIVE



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PLAYSTATION 3



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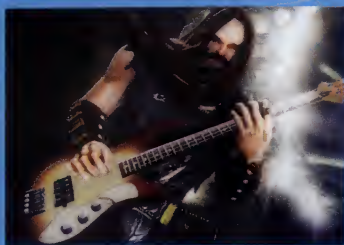
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September 2009 Issue 34



LEISURE SUIT LARRY

Could this be this generation's worst game ever? We certainly hope so. Page 67



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DAVID RUTTER, PRODUCER, FIFA 10

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85 songs, 83 artists. It sounds like a riddle but it's the ninth game in a rockin' series. Come here for the latest. Page 12



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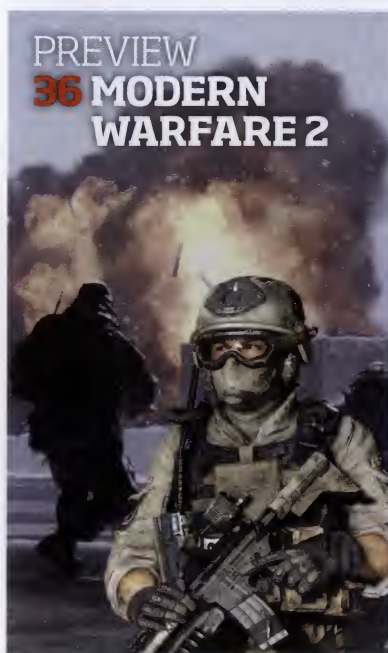
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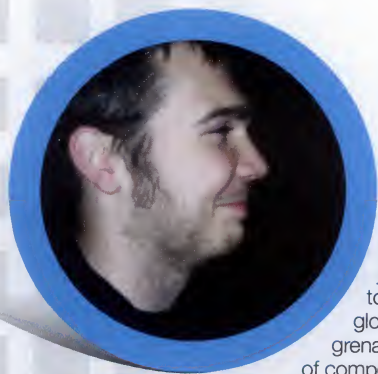
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WELCOME!

There's not a great deal of difference between sports and videogames. It's probably why they often find themselves so closely aligned. While trading tall tales many of us are just as likely to bring up that time so-and-so snatched a million-to-one intercept during a game of park footy for eternal lunchtime glory as that time what's-his-face killed six opponents with one grenade during some late night *Modern Warfare* malarky. It's the thrill of competition. The smell of winning. The air of victory is salty, but it tastes sweet. I think.

Sports videogames combine the best of both worlds, although some do it better than others. We've had plenty of fun over the years with some true classics. *NHL 2002*, mainly for its awesome colour commentary. *NFL 2K5*: a ridiculously polished game of gridiron and the last of its kind before the NFL went exclusive with EA. *FIFA 09* for finally knocking *PES* into the back of the net. *Fight Night Round 4*, which is near-perfect. *Shane Warne Cricket*, perhaps our favourite cricket game ever. *Rugby League 2*, a bit of a rough diamond but a great multiplayer game.

Not everybody understands the appeal of sports videogames, but then again, not everybody understands the appeal of sport in general. There's no getting around the fact, however, that some of today's most popular sports series are among the most bankable franchises around.

Trends change but sports videogames never go away, they just get better.

LUKE REILLY EDITOR

PSN: Capt_Flashheart **PLAYING:** FIGHT NIGHT ROUND 4
WANTING: RED DEAD REDEMPTION

OPS ON: SPORTING MOMENTS



STEPHANIE GOH

Mark Webber finally winning his first Grand Prix. I especially liked his ecstatic screaming over the team radio. I don't think he knew it was being broadcast.

PSN: TBA

Playing: Monster Hunter Freedom Unite
Wanting: Darksiders



PAUL TAYLOR

The 2007 match between Sydney FC and LA Galaxy, purely for the spectacle of Beckham's free kick, a fight in the middle of the game and the 5-3 result. Entertainment wins!

PSN: paulgusta

Playing: Prototype
Wanting: Borderlands



JAMES COTTEE

When Fatso the big-arsed wombat took the high-dive at the Sydney Olympics, proving beyond doubt his superiority over Sid, Ollie, and Dickhead.

PSN: DrWho3987

Playing: Monster Hunter Freedom Unite
Wanting: Borderlands



JAMES ELLIS

Not that long ago my indoor soccer team, Crunch FC, won the Grand Final. Unfortunately, I was on the bench due to a reoccurring 'ability' injury. Sucks to be me.

PSN: gtfaster49

Playing: Battlefield 1943
Wanting: Batman: AA

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SHOUT OUTS: KJR :: Vinnie :: Nicole

:: Cam 'comes through with the FIFA

goods' Jenkins :: NSW 28, QLD 16 ::

Vispi Bhohti for Prime Minister :: Adam

Mathew :: Michael Jackson :: PJ ::

Elissa @ www.edesign101.com.au

Gaming's latest and greatest



17 WHERE TO NOW
Four new narrative directions for space fugitive, Riddick.

GUITAR HERO 5

New songs, new axe

There are constants in life: death, taxes, and a new *Guitar Hero* game each year. Not that we're complaining about the last one. *Guitar Hero 5* has a massive set list of 85 songs - 24 confirmed in a separate list - from 83 artists and is due out September 16. The game also gets a revamped guitar, and while the most obvious changes to it are cosmetic - fake chrome tuning pegs, white pick guard on the striking red faceplate - there are also improvements and refinements to the build quality and functionality. The strum bar has been re-enforced and is now

textured so that, in the words of Brian Bright, Project Director at Neversoft, "it won't get so slippery during those marathon sessions when you have sweat pouring down your wrists." The slider bar now has raised edges, like the yellow fret button, and sends a digital signal rather than *World Tour's* analogue brethren to "allow you to hit the tapping sections with better precision," says Bright. While the guitar comes in a bundle with the game, it's unconfirmed whether it will be available as a standalone package. Expect more news on *GHS* soon.

GUITAR HERO 5 SET LIST

- Band Of Horses
– 'Cigarettes, Wedding Bands'
- Beastie Boys – 'Gratitude'
- Beck – 'Gamma Ray'
- Billy Squier – 'Lonely Is The Night'
- Blur – 'Song 2'
- Bob Dylan – 'All Along The Watchtower'
- Children Of Bodom
– 'Done With Everything, Die For Nothing'
- Coldplay – 'In My Place'
- Darkest Hour – 'Demon(s)'
- David Bowie – 'Fame'
- Deep Purple
– 'Woman From Tokyo ('99 remix)'
- Elliott Smith – 'L.A.'
- Iggy Pop – 'Lust For Life (live)'
- Jeff Beck – 'Scatterbrain (live)'
- John Mellencamp – 'Hurts So Good'
- Kings Of Leon – 'Sex On Fire'
- Queens Of The Stone Age
– 'Make It Wit Chu'
- Rose Hill Drive – 'Sneak Out'
- Santana – 'No One To Depend On (live)'
- The Bronx – 'Six Days A Week'
- Thrive – 'Deadbolt'
- Tom Petty – 'Runnin' Down A Dream'
- Vampire Weekend – 'A-Punk'
- Wolfmother – 'Back Round'



WHITE OUT

Less thrilled about *Guitar Hero's* capability of introducing music to people who may never have heard it before is Jack White, whose bands The White Stripes and The Raconteurs (aka The Saboteurs in Aus) both appear in *GHS*. In a recent interview in Los Angeles for an upcoming documentary about his career, White said, "It's depressing to have a label come and tell you that [*Guitar Hero*] is how kids are learning about music and experiencing music," although he didn't want to stipulate "which format people should get their music in... if you have to be in a video game to get in front of them, that's a little sad." Led Zeppelin's Jimmy Page also tossed in a few kind words. "You think of the drum part that John Bonham did on Led Zeppelin's first track on the first album, 'Good Times Bad Times'," he said. "How many drummers in the world can play that part, let alone on Christmas morning?"



18 AROUND THE WORLD IN PS3
The events that shaped the games.



20 ANGRY SACKBOY
He's cute and adorable when he's happy, but not today.



14 SCREEN-TEST
Our Assassin's Creed pitch for a big screen blockbuster



YO, DELAYS HIT YOU

It's a release date slip and slide!

Tough months ahead, gamers, especially for shooter fans. The biggest of these delays is that the sequel to 2K's masterpiece *BioShock* has slipped from its 'before October 31' release date to 'sometime between January 1 and June 30' – so ask Santa to bring you something else instead. As long as it's not *Red Dead Redemption*, *Mafia II* or *Max Payne 3*,

which are all 2010 titles too. *Fallout 3*'s DLC has been pushed back also, from July to August before finally sliding to September. Activision, responsible for *Modern Warfare 2*, also have two delays: *Singularity* – now for early 2010 to avoid clashing with the *MW2* juggernaut – and *Wolfenstein*, back from August 5 to August 17. Small graces.



A ROSE BY ANY OTHER NAME

In a month of shake-ups and buyouts, three major developers have been absorbed in to other major developers. The biggest of these and the most surprising is Atari have now been completely taken over by Namco Bandai, and will be known as (deep breath) Namco Bandai Partners. This may have repercussions for the state of many Japanese developers who are published by Atari locally: the most prominent in our mind is that of Konami. At this stage it's unclear who will take over what. Also, Eidos, the name behind *Lara Craft*, is now known in publishing circles as Square Enix Europe, and perennially-in-debt creator of *Mortal Kombat*, Midway, has been bought out by Warner Bros. Interactive.

IN SHORT...



UFC president Dana White has lambasted EA Sports for making an MMA game and threatened to expel any UFC fighter from the competition if they signed up with EA.



Duke Nukem's on Facebook (facebook.com/RealDukeNukem?) and he's posted pictures of his is-it-or-is-it-not canned game, *Duke Nukem Forever*. Send him a friend request.



'80s icon Mr. T is starring in his own videogame based on the Mr. T. graphic novel. The T man will be fighting Nazis in South American rain forests and ancient cities. We can't wait.

WHAT'S HOT OR NOT

Too hot to handle? Or too cold to hold?



Mark Webber
If at first you don't succeed...

Song 2

We expect to break a lot of guitars playing this in *GH5*.



Monster Hunter Freedom Unite
We're 120 hours in and counting.



FIFA 09

Yep, we're still playing this and getting ready for 10.



Delays, again
GT5, *Fallout 3* DLC, *BioShock 2*. All pushed back.

Movie/game tie ins

Sometimes good, sometimes not.



Transformers 2
Would someone please arrest Michael Bay or something?

NEW GTA?

SCREENTEST



PSP TO GET NEW GTA GAME

Well, that's not entirely true. Sony's handheld will soon get *GTA: Chinatown Wars*, which debuted on the Nintendo DS in March. The PSP version will be released on UMD and as a digital download in Spring and is being specifically re-built for the PSP with updated graphics, sound and story missions to take full advantage of the hardware. The game follows a young Triad called Huang Lee as he travels to Liberty City after the death of his father and theft of a family heirloom. After playing the DS version of *Chinatown Wars*, our biggest question is how the game will work without a touch screen, which added an intuitive layer to the gameplay.

Chinatown Wars on DS was completely separate to *GTA IV*, apart from using the same map of Liberty City in a top-down view. We're unsure at this stage whether the PSP version will revert to the usual third-person view or retain the top-down viewpoint, though we think it makes sense stylistically to make it like the previous over-the-shoulder *GTA* titles. Either way, we're excited. *CW* was more than competent, and despite the DS's image of being a 'kiddy' console it was a full-blooded *GTA* effort, replete with drugs, violence and foul language, earning it the highest ever rating on the system. The game was a critical success but sold fewer copies than a Harry Nicolaides novel.

ASSASSIN'S CREED

Life and death are a stab in the dark.

The Director

Fernando Meirelles

The Plot

Current day: Bartender Desmond Miles is kidnapped and taken to a top secret facility run by Abstergo Industries who intend on using him to locate a powerful artifact. Placed in a machine called the ANIMUS, Desmond can tap into his ancestor's memories, where he discovers the secret of his lineage: one such forefather was the elite and ego-challenged assassin Altair during the Third Crusade in the 12th Century. While reliving his ancestor's life, he disobeys the creed of the Assassins and is stripped of his ranking, becoming embroiled in a conspiracy.

Can he prove his skill and return to his previous status? Or more so, can he unravel the corruption that lies beneath a very thick blanket of lies before it is too late?

The Pitch

Think any *Bourne* movie but set in the 12th Century.

Green Light or Development Hell?

Massive potential to be a great hit with an underlying topical theme of terrorism and groups of authorities conspiring against their country. Plus it has a Middle Eastern protagonist, a bold though logical move, making a great film to evoke thoughts about the evolving state of world politics and

power, while enjoying the throat-slitting, back-stabbing action. But it would be astoundingly expensive, due to the trio of massive cities and recreating that 12th Century feeling. Any person who can pull three of those cities out of their arse deserves a gold medal. Still, if Michael Bay can nab a cheque for \$200 million for a bloated *Transformers* movie, this is a goer.

Best Line:

Altair: "You give me names, I'll give you blood."

The Cast:

Christian Bale The angry (and constantly freaking out) Desmond Miles

Christian Bale The simmering assassin with an inflated ego

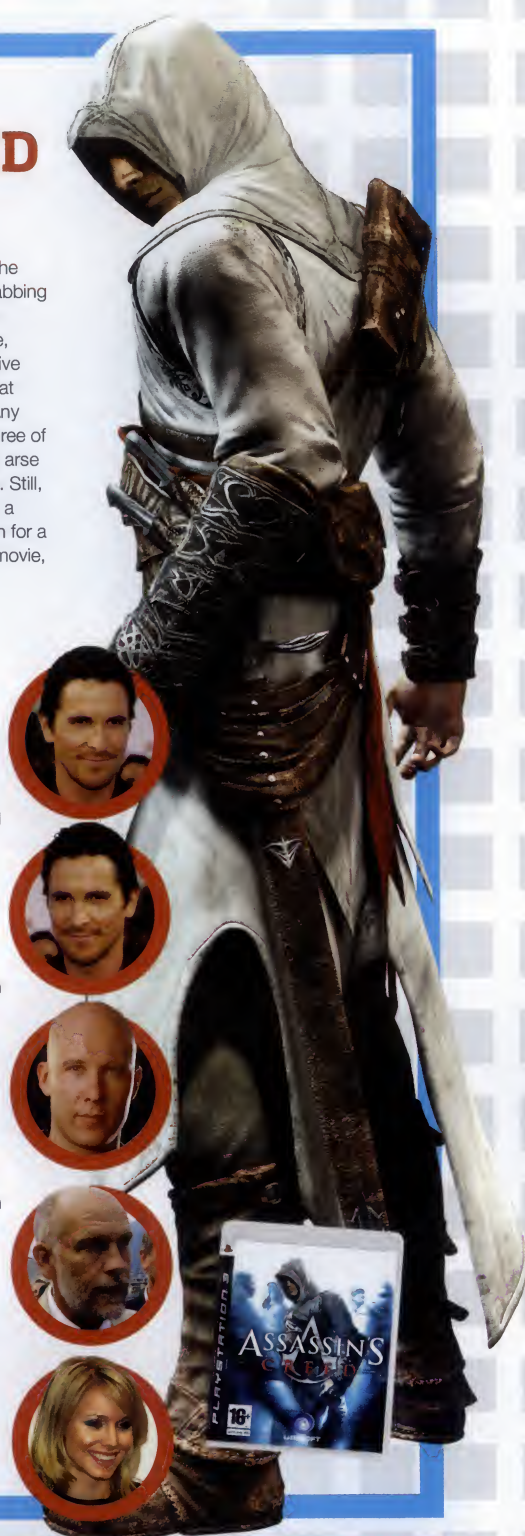
Michael Rosenbaum The bad guy, Robert Desable

John Malkovich The preachy head-assassin Al Mualim

Kristen Bell ANIMUS wrangler Lucy Stillman

"You give me names, I'll give you blood."

ALTAIR



NUMBER CRUNCHING

159

total number of PS3 exclusive games at of June 2009

SEPARATED AT BIRTH

NO. 7 The murderin' Alex Mercer - Jensen Ackles

Their intent and temperament differs, but these two can definitely hold a smirk and slight pout at the same. Ackles already has a leather jacket, all he needs to complete the Mercer ensemble is a hood and you'll be calling Blackwatch to tell these two apart.



WHAT WILL YOU FIGHT FOR?



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TOP 10

CHARACTERS WITH INAPPROPRIATE CLOTHING

Form and function constantly bicker, and while you need the right tools for the job, it's a perk if you can look good while doing it. But, if you're a slave to vanity you might want to re-think your dress code.

CHRISTIE MONTEIRO

TEKKEN

Whether capoeira is a martial art or a form of dance, if you're taking part your body is in near constant motion; spins, flips and handstands are routine. And for women, so are close fitting singlets that cover your torso, not a thin wisp of material that threatens to slip off your shapely cans, no matter how much double-sided tape you're using.

SIR ARTHUR

GHOULS 'N GHOSTS

Poor Arthur. He's totally got the right idea; ghouls and ghosts can hurt, therefore armour is solid protection. Pity that his is seemingly made out of tin foil and literally falls to pieces when he's even sneezed on by a supernatural nasty.

AXEL

TWISTED METAL 2

Vehicles that tear around arenas, dishing out death with a side serving of maim require pilots being inside the vehicle to try and survive. Not so Axel. Locked into a set of giant wheels he's otherwise completely exposed from kneecaps to elbows. You could easily lob a stone in his eyes and his plan's knackered.

ETNA

DISGAEA SERIES

Besides the bare midriff (gotta keep your kidneys warm, kids) and useless choker, Etna's other jewellery is bound to cause dramas. How does she stop her bracelets from slipping over her stick-thin hands and falling either on her lap, or into her dinner?

THE PRINCE

PRINCE OF PERSIA

The Prince circa 2008 does do more right than wrong in the mild Persian climate: a close fitting shirt and pants for maximum movement, as well as leather straps around the wrists that re-enforce weak joints. Pity, then, that for someone who spends a hefty chunk of time scrambling over rocks and running along unforgiving walls his toes are exposed. Stubbing your toe isn't exactly heroic.

ALTAIR

ASSASSIN'S CREED

A hooded white robe is perfect for blending in with a bunch of scholars with their head down who move at a glacial pace. It would, however, knobble your spatial awareness when leaping from rooftops. Plus, those spring-loaded blades up the arm aren't conducive to scratching your delicates.

50 CENT

BLOOD ON THE SAND

Given, Fiddy wore bullet-proof armour with hand grenades on his romp through a Middle-Eastern country – a sensible idea – but he also wore the outfit prior to this adventure *at his concert*, which surely would've proved to be a catastrophic wardrobe malfunction.

GINA CAVALLI

R: RACING

So, you're racing high-powered cars on a closed track, much like supercar drivers: it makes sense you need a fire-retardant race suit. Oh, you're a supermodel in your spare time? Guess that means the zip on your jacket can only come half way up your heaving bosom. Surely that ain't FIA approved.

BAYONETTA

BAYONETTA

Jumping, slashing etc must be murder on your knees and ankles, and getting your centre of gravity right to deliver a killer slash and – most improbably – a bullet from the gun mounted on your foot needs flat-soled pavement trampers. Say hello to scoliosis, then, with these spine-cracking heels.

JILL VALENTINE

RESIDENT EVIL 3

The thing about zombies is that they love brains and flesh. It's totally sensible then to cover up any fleshy bits, especially if you've already seen what a zombie can do. Jill, however, post-Raccoon Mansion, prefers a tube top, a short skirt and tying an easy-to-stain white jumper around her waist. Rookie.



THE MONOCLES OF RIDDICK

HOW WILL IT PLAY?

To swap thoroughly exciting tales with his shooting colleagues about fine escapades, Riddick must become embroiled in ridiculous circumstances, each more elaborate than the last to trump the last fellow. A point and click affair with smatterings of QTEs, we imagine, with upgradable monocles.

EXPLAIN YOURSELF

Eyeshine? Old news. Riddick ditched the utilitarian goggles and singlet, instead opting for a collection of very dapper monocles and tailored suits.

EXPLAIN YOURSELF

With a name like Richard B. Riddick, he could either be a serial killer or a benevolent (though deadly to his enemies) character in a C.S. Lewis-style children's novel. The first's been done.

THE STORY

Esteemed gentleman and all round good egg, Sir Richard B. Riddick (the 'B' stands for Bottomsworth) is ingrained in the upper echelons of England's cultural elite, quaffing fine port and procuring the finest tobacco this side of the Americas. Stories abound about who did what, why and how they got out that scrape.

PROBABILITY

Unlikely, old boy.

HOW WILL IT PLAY?

Action adventure RPG. Take charge of the young 'uns as they miraculously stumble across the land, avoiding being devoured by the Necros by virtue of crude melee weaponry – shivs, knives and boar spears – that they arm themselves with, before finding Riddick.

THE CHRONICLES OF RIDDICK: THE KNIVES, THE SHIV AND THE BOAR SPEAR

THE STORY

Four children from the '40s stumble upon a magical boar spear that transports them to a fantasy land where the legend of Riddick is whispered throughout the inhabitants who live under the terrifying rule of Necromongers. Find Riddick and all will be resolved!

PROBABILITY

It's kinda been done before, though without protagonists so young, or from a dicky time period. Think *God of War* and *DMC*.

WHERE TO NOW?

We're resigned to the probability that further playable adventures of Riddick are classified "unlikely", while the film series languishes in the glacial change between big budget also-rans to tighter independent flicks. Static source material means no spin-offs. Unless, of course, you were to look at these.

EXPLAIN YOURSELF

The title, to us, sounds like it could've been cooked up by that marvellous author and illustrator, Theodor Seuss Geisel. This would be very, very dark though.

THE STORY

As he sharpened his blades on the leathery belt, Our Riddick did ponder "will justice be dealt? I have slayed and have maimed 'til I'm blue in the face. It's hard being me; doubt I can keep up the pace."

HOW WILL IT PLAY?

You rhyme with the reason to stab as you wander in 2D side scrolling the rhythm shan't blunder. The music will follow your pad tap-a-tapping. So get with the beat, or you will end up lacking.

PROBABILITY

A 2D music rhythm game that delves into the technical anapestic tetrameter and amphibrachic tetrameter is a tad niche. And painful to get right.

THE CHRONICLES OF RIDDICK: AS TOLD BY DR SEUSS.

THE CHRONICLES OF RIDDICK: NAPPING ON THE SOFA

EXPLAIN YOURSELF

The oft-unappreciated aspect about Riddick is that he has a quiet side. Why? He's usually making a racket snapping necks or turning a chump's innards outwards for anyone to notice. The previous distractions were cruel ruses to stop him from getting to the comfiest seat in the house and putting his feet up.

THE STORY

Riddick sits on the couch, puts his feet up, and watches a bit of rubbish daytime TV, before slowly dozing off. His dreams, however, are nightmarish, and despite the justification he applies to his dirty deeds they come back to haunt.

HOW WILL IT PLAY?

Pretty similarly to the last Riddick games, except it follows twin narratives in a blunt appropriation of something like *The Matrix*. Peaks and troughs in the action would be defined by his nightmares and lounging around the house, respectively.

PROBABILITY

We doubt it'd be produced but we'd like to see it. Riddick did fall asleep at the start of *Escape from Butcher Bay* and dreamed about his escape, so the developers wouldn't be averse to dabbling in more fantasy.

AROUND THE WORLD IN PS3

OPS trawls high and low for what's going on around the globe in gaming



BRIGHTON, ENGLAND

NOTHING BUT THE TOOTH

This bloke could be the next Riddick. Doctors have implanted part of a tooth into the eye of a South Yorkshire man, Martin Jones, who lost his sight over a decade ago in an accident at a scrap yard. A layer of his canine tooth was used to hold a piece of skin, taken from another part of his body, which itself acts as a lens. What the hell? It sounds like the opening cutscene for a bad videogame – one where the main hero would presumably go on to fight Nazis, or zombies. His one weakness? Tooth decay. Causes blindness. Again.



CHESTER, ENGLAND

APE ESCAPE

Approximately 30 chimpanzees at Chester Zoo escaped their enclosure, 'Chimp Island', forcing the evacuation of more than 5,000 of the zoo's visitors. The chimps made their way into a keeper area where their food is prepared. Forbes magazine has listed it as one of the best 15 zoos in the world. The zookeepers were equipped with special teleporting nets to catch the chimps. Actually, we made that part up.



WASHINGTON, USA

FLOPPY FLOP

Kids, piracy's bad. It's teaching an entire generation of spoilt little shits you don't need to earn money to pay for things you want. Oh, and it funds terrorism and stuff. The American group Software & Information Industry Association, is bringing that message to the 21st Century masses by updating its 1992 campaign with the help of "anti-piracy hero" MC Double Def DP, who raps the message in a video with the help of Klingons. We suggest you check it out at tinyurl.com/m3anx3



THE GROUCH SAYS GAME

NEW YORK, USA

The Joan Ganz Cooney Center at Sesame Workshop – the group associated with Sesame Street – has released a report that outlines the positive effects gaming has on children, including expanding their vocabulary and problem-solving skills. "Despite their reputation as promoters of violence and mayhem, digital games have in fact been shown to help children gain content and vital foundational and 21st Century skills," reads the report.



TOKYO, JAPAN

SOFTWARE SLUMP

After a successful 2008, the Japanese market has witnessed a dramatic drop in both software and hardware sales in the first half of 2009. Overall, the market did 219 billion yen (\$3 billion) of business – a massive 24.4 per cent drop from the same period over 2008. The PSP sold 1.18 million units, whilst 550,000 PS3s were sold.

INTERNATIONAL CHARTS



UK

Source: ELSPA

- 1 Fight Night Round 4 EA
- 2 Call of Juarez: Bound in Blood Ubisoft
- 3 Tiger Woods PGA Tour 10 EA
- 4 Transformers: ROTF Activision
- 5 Virtua Tennis 2009 Sega
- 6 UFC 2009 Undisputed THQ
- 7 inFamous Sony
- 8 Ghostbusters Sony
- 9 Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare Activision
- 10 Prototype Activision



JAPAN

Source: VGChartz

- 1 Rorona no Atelier: Arland no Renkinjutsushi Gust
- 2 BlazBlue ArcSystemWorks
- 3 Agarest Senki Zero Compile Heart
- 4 Shin Sangoku Musou 5 Empires Koei
- 5 The Last Guy Sony
- 6 Tom Clancy's HAWX Ubisoft
- 7 Bionic Commando Capcom
- 8 Wanted: Weapons of Fate Spike
- 9 Winning Post World Koei
- 10 Gran Turismo 5: Prologue Sony



USA

Source: NPD

- 1 Fight Night Round 4 EA
- 2 BlazBlue: Calamity Trigger Aksys Games
- 3 Call of Juarez: Bound in Blood Ubisoft
- 4 UFC 2009 Undisputed THQ
- 5 Prototype Activision
- 6 Ghostbusters Atari
- 7 Transformers: ROTF Activision
- 8 inFamous Sony
- 9 Tiger Woods PGA Tour 10 EA
- 10 Guitar Hero III: Legends of Rock Activision

RELEASE SCHEDULE

Coming soon to a store near you...

AUGUST 2009



Ashes Cricket 2009
GENRE: SPORT
DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO
BANDAI PARTNERS



Sacred II
GENRE: RPG
DISTRIBUTOR: MADMAN



Wolfenstein
GENRE: SHOOTER
DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION



SuperCar Challenge
GENRE: RACING
DISTRIBUTOR: AIE



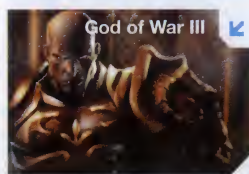
The King of Fighters XII
GENRE: FIGHTING
DISTRIBUTOR: AIE



Up!
GENRE: ACTION
DISTRIBUTOR: THQ



G.I. Joe: The Rise of Cobra
GENRE: ACTION
DISTRIBUTOR: EA



Bayonetta
GENRE: ACTION
DISTRIBUTOR: SEGA



BioShock 2
GENRE: SHOOTER
DISTRIBUTOR: 2K



Alpha Protocol
GENRE: RPG
DISTRIBUTOR: SEGA



Darksiders
GENRE: ACTION
DISTRIBUTOR: THQ



I Am Alive
GENRE: ACTION
DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT



Final Fantasy XIII
GENRE: RPG
DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT



Dark Void
GENRE: ACTION
DISTRIBUTOR: THQ



God of War III
GENRE: ACTION
DISTRIBUTOR: SONY



Gran Turismo 5
GENRE: RACING
DISTRIBUTOR: SONY



Heavy Rain
GENRE: ADVENTURE
DISTRIBUTOR: SONY



Just Cause 2
GENRE: ACTION
DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO
BANDAI PARTNERS



Mafia II
GENRE: ACTION
DISTRIBUTOR: 2K



MAG
GENRE: SHOOTER
DISTRIBUTOR: SONY



Red Dead Redemption
GENRE: ACTION
DISTRIBUTOR: ROCKSTAR



Modern Warfare 2
GENRE: SHOOTER
DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION



Singularity
GENRE: SHOOTER
DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION



Tekken 6
GENRE: FIGHTING
DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO
BANDAI PARTNERS



Uncharted 2: Among Thieves
GENRE: ACTION
DISTRIBUTOR: SONY



FIFA 10
GENRE: SPORT
DISTRIBUTOR: EA



Crysis 2
GENRE: ACTION
DISTRIBUTOR: EA



Assassin's Creed 2
GENRE: ACTION
DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT



LEGO Rock Band
GENRE: MUSIC
DISTRIBUTOR: WARNER
BROTHERS INTERACTIVE



Dante's Inferno
GENRE: ACTION
DISTRIBUTOR: EA



Tony Hawk: Ride
GENRE: SPORT
DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION



R.U.S.E.
GENRE: RTS
DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT



Avatar
GENRE: ACTION
DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT

LATE/TBC 2009



DJ Hero
GENRE: MUSIC
DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION



Blur
GENRE: RACING
DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION



Borderlands
GENRE: SHOOTER
DISTRIBUTOR: 2K



Dragon Age: Origins
GENRE: RPG
DISTRIBUTOR: EA



Battlefield: Bad Company 2
GENRE: SHOOTER
DISTRIBUTOR: EA



NBA 2K 10
GENRE: SPORT
DISTRIBUTOR: 2K

SEPTEMBER 2009



Batman: AA
GENRE: ACTION
DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO
BANDAI PARTNERS



Colin McRae: DiRT 2
GENRE: RACING
DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO
BANDAI PARTNERS



Katamari Forever
GENRE: PUZZLE
DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO
BANDAI PARTNERS



OF2: Dragon Rising
GENRE: SHOOTER
DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO
BANDAI PARTNERS



IL-2: Sturmovik: Birds of Prey
GENRE: FLIGHT
DISTRIBUTOR: AIE

QUOTE UNQUOTE

Industry chatter, inside tips and loose lips



"This is how in a simple way you can find out if it's a gamer you want to play with. Ask them if they have a Wii. If they say yes, get the f---k out of there." **Shia LaBeouf** on the Wii. Smart guy.



"It really gets your cardio workout and it's a video game... I think that's amazing. I hope we keep heading in that direction." **Megan Fox**, on *Wii Fit*. We'll still love you Megan.



"[Sony] have to cut the price [of the PS3]...If we are being realistic, we might have to stop supporting Sony." **Tough words from the CEO of Activision Bobby Kotick.**



"[Kotick] likes to make a lot of noise... He's putting pressure on me and I'm putting pressure on him. That's the nature of business." **Sony's Sir Howard Stringer responds.**

AUSTRALIAN CHARTS

Source: GfK



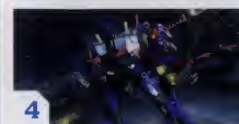
1
inFamous



2
Ghostbusters



3
Prototype



4
Transformers: ROTF



5
UFC 2009: Undisputed



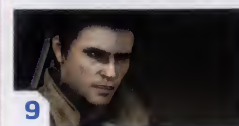
6
Guitar Hero Greatest Hits



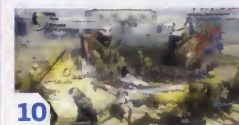
7
COD4: MW GOTY



8
Red Faction: Guerrilla



9
Silent Hill Homecoming



10
Dynasty Warriors 6: Empires

ALL YOUR GAME ARE BELONG TO US

“Games made for artificial cheese-eating young-Earth creationists won't necessarily suit normal, rational people”



OFFICIAL PLAYSTATION ANGRY SACKBOY

Plenty of stuff gets fundamentally altered to appeal to American audiences. We should be used to it by now, for we've turned a blind eye to it for years.

We all casually accepted *Mad Max* being hacked apart and re-dubbed with American voice actors because the US distributors feared the American public wouldn't understand the accent, despite the fact we speak the same language. It didn't bother us because we still had the superior original.

No-one really got their knickers in a knot when the US publisher of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* demanded the title be changed to *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* because they assumed droves of intimidated corn-fed yokels would turn away in horror if they thought the book was about philosophy. It didn't matter because we all still had the proper version.

There was some furore when the organisers of the 2008 Beijing Olympics decided to change the swimming schedule to have finals contested in the mornings rather than evenings in order to allow US audiences to view them live during prime time. It all still worked out though – the rest of the world simply adjusted, made peace with the fact the seppos were getting preferential treatment and went about beating them as often as possible.

Games are different, however. When a game is fiddled with to make it more palatable for the American masses, it's ruined for the rest of the world. Permanently.

Developers and publishers alike will moan that there are more consoles in the USA than Europe, and that's why they're tailoring their games to suit American gamers. Louder and dumber seems to be the general idea.

There are more *people*, however, in Europe and other PAL territories like Australia and New Zealand. Maybe if we had more great games that appealed to us folk as much as this new wave of ostentatious junk does to the Yanks we'd buy more consoles.

Developers need to realise the differences between America and the fistful of nations that make up gaming's PAL territories are vast. A somewhat unsafe percentage of the American population, for instance, believe dinosaur fossils are part of some kooky 150-year-old conspiracy to disprove the Bible. They also eat cheese out of a can. Games made for artificial cheese-eating young-Earth creationists won't necessarily suit normal, rational people.

I say all this because I just lost an extreme rally cross race to a very extreme Dave Mirra in his extreme Pontiac Solstice in the extremely extreme *Colin McRae DIRT 2*. And I died a little.

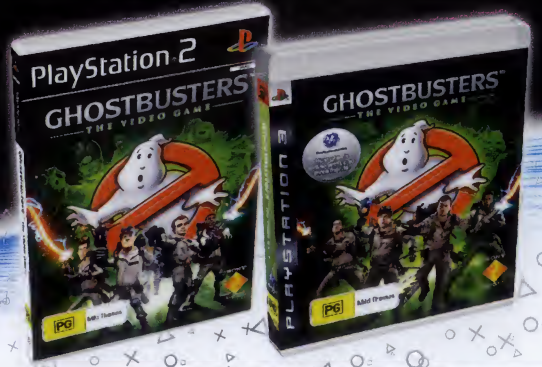
Angry Sackboy isn't fooled, and thinks rally games should have more rallying and less bullshit. He also admits he's liked most of the Americans he's met, and none of them were corn-fed fundamentalists.



GHOSTBUSTERS™

— THE VIDEO GAME —

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OFFICIAL PLAYSTATION
PAUL TAYLOR

The last time I voluntarily got up out of bed before the alarm went off was just after *GTA IV* was released. For an hour before my normal breakfast time, I would inch through the lives of Niko, Roman et al. This went on for a couple of weeks as I finished off the single player campaign. Night times were, usually, devoted to doing the same but for a greater stretch. Plus, mornings were quiet before the rest of the household rose, and thus conspicuously absent of the groans and moans that usually accompanied the orchestral sound of the PS3's welcoming chime whenever I wanted to spend a couple of hours in Liberty City. Months later and despite the list of awesome games that filter through the office and homeward I haven't been that hooked on something to push me to get up any earlier than 7.45am.

Now, though, it looks like mornings are prime game playing time for two reasons. Members of the household have changed jobs and are out the door well before I wake up, and their reasonable tolerance has ebbed to a dangerous low. I'm being lambasted for not helping to cook dinner, or wash up, or just generally converse. If my life were a videogame, the screen would be fading to black and white and I'd be looking for cover so my health could re-generate. I've tried to reason and fight it, but the evidence that I spent more time with the controller than anything or anyone else was when the house was empty for a week. Dishes piled up while the PS3 ran hot. Cutlery poked out of the sink like spikes out of a medieval pit as Mars thundered under the cacophony of machine gun fire from the hands of Alex Mason. Cupboards grinned an empty, mug-less leer while BOY and GIRL stretched across the universe. My conscience and sense of responsibility, it seems, went on holiday too. The world could've burned and I wouldn't have noticed, as I only oscillated between work and couch.

It's a fair call, really.

Still, this evaporation of PlayStation time is bound to continue. I have to be more frugal with how I devote my time to games. Spending an hour or more, outside of the office, with games like *InFamous* or *Fallout 3* is easy to do, requisite even, in order to delve in to the story and exploit character expansion. With this shift in time dynamics I don't think I can reasonably donate that much time to, say, *UFC*, *Fight Night* or *Prototype*, despite being a fan of all three. All I need now are thicker curtains to cut out the glare of the sun. That, or move to bigger digs with a spare room for my telly and consoles.

Paul Taylor wants to fight for his rights but would rather be eating dinner.

GAME TIME

“If my life were a videogame, the screen would be fading to black and white and I'd be looking for cover so my health could re-generate”



SUPERCAR

CHALLENGE

OUT 3 SEPTEMBER



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- Maserati
- Mercedes-Benz
- Chevrolet

GAME FEATURES:

- **REALISTIC WEATHER CONDITIONS TO TEST YOUR DRIVING SKILLS**
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For a chance to win one of these awesome mobiles simply tell us, in 25 words or less, what your most anticipated release of 2009-2010 is now you've seen last month's killer E3 line-up! Entry details below.



BY ALL THAT'S HOLY

Thanks to Madman Interactive we've got 10 copies of the *Sacred 2: Fallen Angel Collector's Edition* to give away to 10 readers. This collector's edition contains a Seraphim figurine, an exclusive unlockable in-game imp, a double-sided poster with map of Ancaria and an audio CD featuring the music of *Sacred*.

For a chance to win simply tell us, in 25 words or less, what's the kookiest German invention this side of *Sacred 2*? Entry details below.



HOW TO ENTER

To enter *Official PlayStation Magazine* competitions email your entries to ops@derwenthoward.com.au with the name of the competition ONLY in the subject line. Email entries are entitled to one entry (multiple entries will be deleted!). Alternatively, send clearly marked postal entries to OPS competitions PO BOX 1037, Bondi Junction 1355. Please include your name, age and address with your answer on the back of an envelope. Chance plays no part in determining winners. Competitions close 09/09/2009. Winners will be notified by mail.

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Speak to us!

LETTER OF THE MONTH!

BLACKMAIL MAIL

Hey OPS,
Been reading the mag for ages now and thought I might drop my first line. Guess I'm writing after hearing last night on *Good Game*, that Activision chairman Bobby Kotick has threatened to stop producing titles for the PS3 if Sony doesn't bring its console price down.

I really don't appreciate it when people in positions of power do this kind of public threat. Mr. Kotick is quite a powerful man in the world of videogames and this is downright **BLACKMAIL**.

Now he surely has the numbers of the top brass at Sony, so why not use them?

Gamers won't appreciate this either. If you look at this another way, Kotick isn't saying Activision might not support Sony in the future, he is saying he's going to hurt the millions of gamers who already own a PS3 by not letting them have his company's latest titles.

I hope this is just a media wind up, because if I miss out on *MW2* I'll f--king spew.

Also guys, funny I ask this after spewing about Activision, is it possible that you can get a interview with Infinity Ward to get the latest on *Modern Warfare 2*. I've seen it plastered on an Xbox 360 mag but I don't want to buy it.

Luke Ablott, via email

We wouldn't worry about that too much. Activision-Blizzard is currently the biggest third-party publisher in the world. If the largest third-party in the world couldn't afford to make PS3 games, no-one could – and yet at E3 this year we just saw more games that you could poke 100 sticks at from publishers all across the globe, big and small. If 505 Games can make PS3 titles, so can Activision-Blizzard. There was a Modern Warfare 2 interview doing the rounds in an Xbox 360 magazine recently, but we can do you one better than that – in a few weeks we'll be flying over to California to visit Infinity Ward personally for an exclusive hands-on with the most highly-anticipated shooter ever. If everything goes to plan expect it next issue. It'll be big.



People are weird...

REALITY BITES

Dear OPS
Hey guys, just a quick email. I recently stumbled across an issue I didn't even know existed, nor could exist: game inaccessibility due to hyperrealism. The issue was brought to my attention when recently I saw my friends going nuts about *GTAIII* proclaiming it is the greatest game ever made and when I suggested they try playing the masterpiece of *GTAIV* I was met with outrage and disgust. I was obviously puzzled by this and when I questioned why they didn't like *GTAIV* but loved its brother, the admittedly great *GTAIII*, they replied, "*GTAIV* is simply too much." Confused and offended I took a moment to consider what they had said. Too much? These are gamers, not average people on the street, who believed that *GTAIV* was too much, too close to reality to be enjoyable. They argued that the realism and the many, many features that hardcore gamers consider the proverbial cherry on top of a delicious cake to be far too real to make the game enjoyable. This made me think to myself, have games come to far? The next gen advances are tremendous and are pushing the boundaries of gaming itself but is it neglecting a large market in the games industry, the casual gamer. If this approach can be taken by relatively frequent gamers towards the gem of *GTAIV* then what of other titles? Have the next gen physics and hyperrealism taken the simple pleasure away from gaming? Many people play games to escape to a different reality, to do things they could not do themselves in the real world such as fire a gun, hijack a car or engage in a dangerous adventure. So I ask my fellow gamers is there a line where we say it is too much or is it when we breach this line we are no longer simply making a game but something much more?

Andrew Watts, via email

*Your friends are high. We feel most people who don't like *GTAIV* because it's too "real" are simply intimidated by it. *GTAIV* plunked you a hyper-realistic and dynamic environment and gives you the tools and the physics to make your own fun. If you can't enjoy *GTAIV* you're an uncreative boofhead. It's so rich. Many gamers don't need a game to give them shit-spraying and nudie run mini-modes to have fun – most of the enjoyment we have in *GTAIV* comes from poking the world simulation and seeing what happens when it pokes back. It doesn't hold your hand and desperately try to entertain you with increasingly zany garbage. It says, "Here's the playground. Have fun."*

We don't think games have come too far at all. In fact, when games start going backwards – that's when we really start to tune out.



LETTER OF THE MONTH WINS...

GH GH
The letter of the month this issue will receive a copy of *Guitar Hero Greatest Hits* for their troubles – enjoy!

NEW CUTTING EDGE EXTRAS AND BLU-RAY INNOVATION



THE COMPLETE EXPERIENCE

FROM THE DIRECTOR OF WATCHMEN

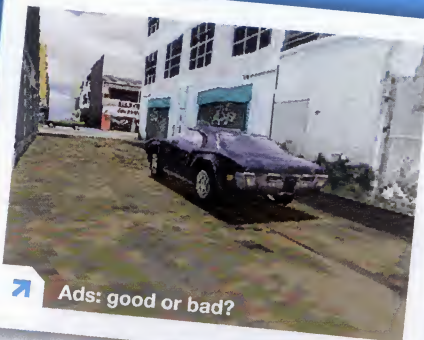
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Full color publication packed with Insider Information and Photos!
- **Additional Features via Warner Bros. BD-Live™**



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OUT NOW



'AD IT UP TO 'ERE

Hey all, I thought I would just have a little rant about something and I couldn't think of any other place better than my favourite PlayStation magazine.

Anyway, enough sucking up – the issue I want to talk about is advertising for games. Is it just me or have ads for games increased a lot in the last couple of months or so? I've been seeing ads on TV for *Killzone 2*, *Resident Evil 5* and I even saw an advert for *Red Faction: Guerrilla* on the side of a bus. A bloody bus!

I personally don't like this, it's making video games too mainstream which is bringing in a whole lot of 'casual gamers.' And the game developers see all these casuals coming in and make all their games ridiculously easy, and I tell you nothing gives me the shits more than when you shell out 80-100 bucks on a game and it only lasts a week or less.

It's not like it used to be, say for example PSone games. They were hard, which was great. I was only young back then and had little money, so when I saved up for ages for a game I really wanted it to last. And I tell you when I bought *Driver* that was sure worth the money. Like you have said a couple of times before, that last level is a killer!

Brendan Meharry, Perth

Publishers advertise their games to sell more of them, because it makes them more money. Money, last time we checked, makes the world go around (in conjunction with the gravitational pull of the sun).

We don't disagree that games are easier, but we're still confused by this feeling among gamers that a week or so of play isn't enough for games that cost around \$80-\$100. It's nice when they last longer, but people spend \$30 on DVDs that are over in 90 minutes or so – so what's the difference? It seems to us that gamers are becoming more and more disinclined to play a game more than once these days.

SPEAK TO US

Love the mag? Hate the mag? We want your opinions and questions on OPS, on games – on anything that you feel the need to share with your fellow readers. The best letter of each issue wins the Game of the Month! Write to us on paper or on a computer at:

OPS Feedback
Derwent Howard
PO Box 1037
Bondi Junction, NSW 1355
ops@derwenthoward.com.au

Speak to us!

CUTTINGS

MONSTER MASH

Hey guys, I just have to say thank you so much for publishing the *Monster Hunter* special in the July issue. I completely agree with everything you had to say, it is such a great and addictive game.

Brock Gallacher, via email

No worries.

MISSED THE DATE

Hey OPS! Read your mag every month, love coming home and seeing a fresh mag on the kitchen bench, keep up the good work. Does anyone have a confirmed release date on *Modern Warfare 2* yet?

David Black, via email

Cheers for the props David, although we have confirmed the release date of *Modern Warfare 2* in the mag before – it's November 10 last we heard.

TOUGH LOVE

Love the mag. Print Memumza's letter, or may 100,000 maggot carrying blowflies infest all of your anuses.

Keiran Stibbard, via email

We'll print this much. Does that count?

WHAT'S THE STORY?

Hey guys, I have been reading the mag for the past three years and love it. I have been a gamer since as long as I can remember and it is not my business to whinge or moan but I have found myself wondering recently, "What is the go with the story?". By this I mean that I have found myself somewhat confused and upset by the standard of story telling in video games. I remember a golden age of *Zelda* on the Nintendo 64 (before Nintendo decided making good games just wasn't good business), *Syphon Filter* on the glorious PSone and many other games where the gameplay was of the highest standard and to match this gold standard was a story. Recently, stories have suffered for better graphics, more missions, more enemies on screen or 2000 ways in which to kill someone. Now I am not condemning next gen advances, they are amazing to say the least. Instead I am wondering why we cannot enjoy both. Consider the masterpiece *GTAIV*, the pinnacle of this generation of gaming in my opinion. Perfect graphics and an environment that blurs the line between gaming and reality, but it did not simply stop there as the story told by Rockstar was of award-winning calibre. I recognise

other games have achieved similar greatness, i.e. *Uncharted* or *inFamous*, however these games are few and far between. I recently bought *Prototype* and I had a feeling that the story, while intriguing, was under cooked and thus the overall game experience suffered. If games are to transcend the stereotype then it is their ability to tell powerful and emotionally gripping stories that must prevail. For now my hope rests with *Heavy Rain*.

PS. You guys have the best job in the world.

Andrew Watts, via email

Story is important, but we don't know if there are fewer great stories out there – you just need to discover them. It's a good job, but we don't know about best. Do supermodels have underwear wranglers?



THE PlayStation CROSSWORD!

Official Magazine - Australia

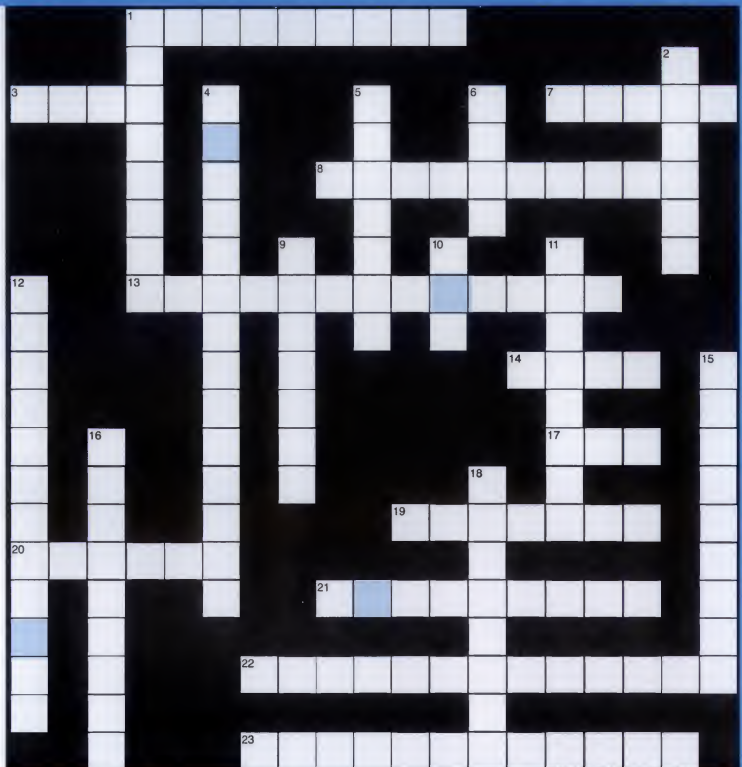
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ACROSS

- Naruto's perverted technique (9)
- Game that destroyed Free Radical's reputation (4)
- Drug abused by Bane (5)
- Liquid is Solid's ____ (10)
- Caused Japan-wide coin shortage in 1978 (13)
- China has banned this kind of farming (4)
- StarCraft II* will NOT support it (3)
- Kitty cat cooks in *Monster Hunter* (7)
- Naruto wants to be ____ (6)
- What Solid Snake and Gabe Newell have in common (9)
- Game that destroyed Peter Molyneux's reputation (13)
- Harley Quinn's old job (12)

DOWN

- Duke Nukem gobbled these for health (8)
- Eddie Riggs's 'Deuce' is a magic ____ (6)
- Bat-wilding goons in *The Warriors* (14)
- Sacred 2*: obtuse, because it was made by ____ (7)
- The next in the series will be *Wipeout* ____ (4)
- New owners of id (7)
- Poison Ivy can hypnotise any ____ (3)
- Home town of *TF2* Scout (8)
- Sam Fisher's former employer (12)
- Stronger than Machalite Ore (9)
- Game that destroyed John Romero's reputation (9)
- Alpha male of the ice apes (8)



14. RESISTANCE 18. OTTSEL 20. AKUJI 22. FEZ
FARBUS 23. REPUBLIC 24. TIMECRISIS DOWN 1. LEIGION 3. CASTLEVAANIA 4. MIDNIGHT 6. DARKCHRONICLE 8. HARDWARE 9. TOBYGARD 11. STARKWEATHER 13. SHADOW

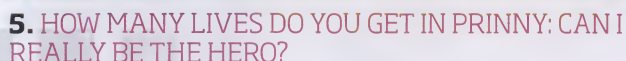
Our imaginatively titled quiz will sort out the wheat from the chaff. Prove your worth with these brainbusters!



2. PSONE OWNERS COULD BUY A SPECIAL DEV KIT FOR MAKING THEIR OWN GAMES. WHAT WAS IT CALLED?

3. RAIDEN WAS MADE THE MAIN CHARACTER OF METAL GEAR SOLID 2 IN AN ATTEMPT TO APPEAL TO WHICH DEMOGRAPHIC?

4. WHEN WAS GRAND THEFT AUTO 2 SET?



12. IDENTIFY THE GAMES FROM THE SCREENSHOTS:



6. WHAT DO THESE PEOPLE HAVE IN COMMON?



7. WHAT INDIE GAME WAS THE PROTOTYPE FOR LITTLEBIGPLANET?



8. VIB-RIBBON HAD TWO SEQUELS IN JAPAN THAT WERE NEVER RELEASED IN THE WEST. NAME THEM.

**9. NAME THE MUSIC VISUALISATION SOFTWARE BUILT-
IN TO THE ORIGINAL PLAYSTATION.**



11. THE YELLOW-SUITED BLOKES YOU COULDN'T SHOOT IN SYPHON FILTER.

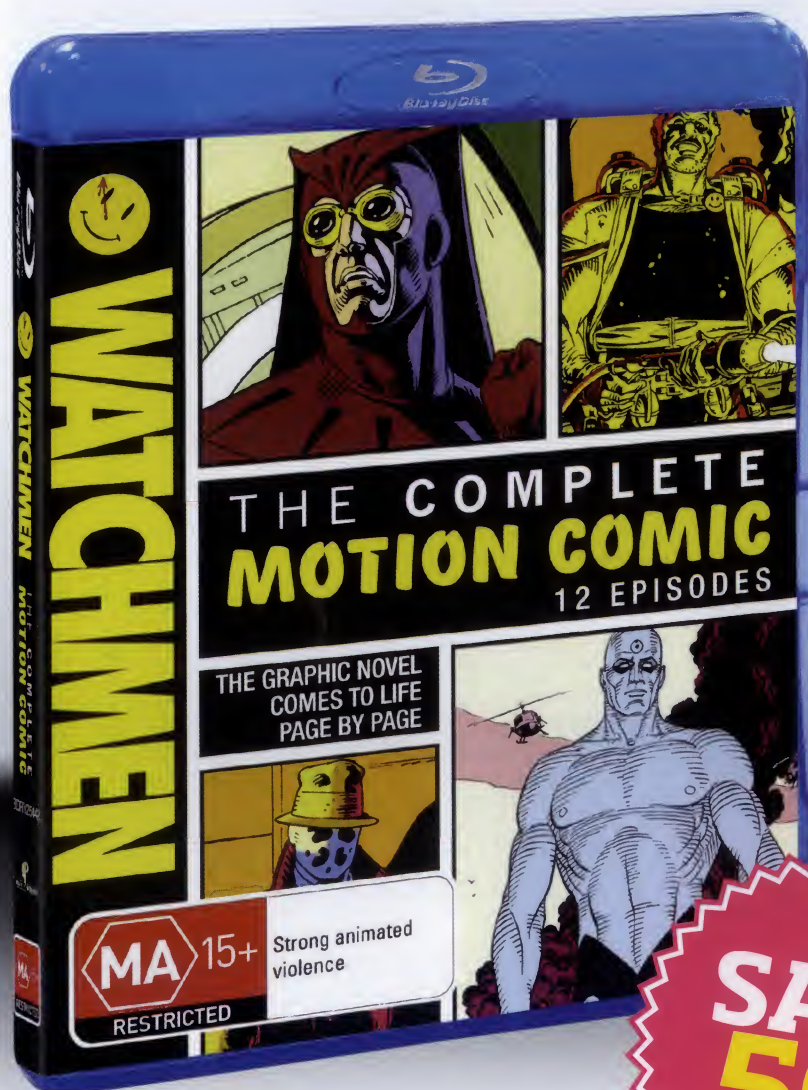
ANSMWERS 1. Mayor Mike Haggart, 2. Net Varoze, 3. Teenage girls, true story, Nice one, Kojima, 4. Three weeks in the future, 5. 1,000, 6. They all voiced characters in Batman, Arkham Asylum, 7. Bag Dail Kung Fu, 8. Mojo-Bibbo (2003), and Vile-Filipps (2004), 9. The Soundscope, 10. The Jockey, 11. CBCDC agents, 12. A) Battlefield: Bad Company B) Tekken: Dark Resurrection C) Disgaea: Afternoon of Darkness D) FINAL FANTASY XI: A Moogles Kupo d'Etat E) Herdy Gerdy F) Dropship: United Peace Force

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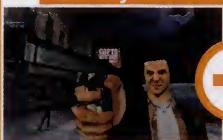
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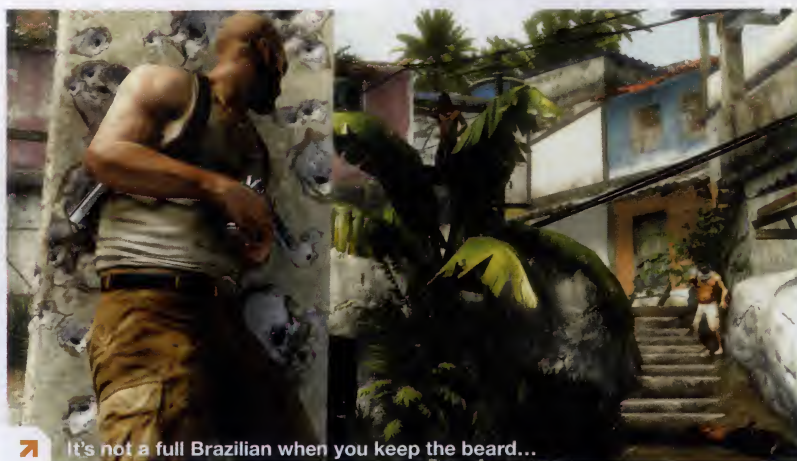
Exclusive looks at the very best

IT'S LIKE...

Max Payne



City of God



It's not a full Brazilian when you keep the beard...



He came for the women. He stayed for the gun violence.



PS3 GENRE: ACTION | RELEASE: LATE 2009 | DISTRIBUTOR: ROCKSTAR | DEVELOPER: ROCKSTAR VANCOUVER

MAX PAYNE 3

No Payne, no gain

Greek philosopher Aristotle once said that the aim of the wise is not to secure pleasure, but to avoid pain. Prudent words, particularly when you reapply it to gaming's favourite down-and-out cop. Avoiding Payne has always been wise, and little seems to have changed there.

But everything else has.

MAD MAX

It only takes one look at the screenshots to confirm that *Max Payne 3* is something very different from its predecessors. The first two titles saw Max going toe to toe with the Big Apple's worst from behind a badge – Max was DEA in the original, and NYPD in the sequel. New York City was the backdrop for both of these gritty noir action thrillers, and Max seemed like a strictly nocturnal creature – only coming out at night to unleash his two-fisted bullet symphony upon the city's most notorious scumbags. *Max Payne 3*, however, begins 12 years after the events of *Max Payne 2* – and nearly 8000 kilometres away from his former home in New York.

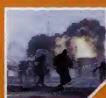
It's clearly been a tough 12 years too; Max is almost unrecognisable. Since the events of *Max Payne 2*, Max left the NYPD and began taking odd jobs in security and consulting. He's battled alcoholism and an addiction to painkillers, and

the latter is still haunting him. Age is creasing his now heavily scarred face, part of which is now covered by a thick beard. He's also rocking a John McClane chrome dome, stained singlet and shoulder holster, and he completes the look with a pair of battered khaki cargoes. He's thicker set too – the passing years have brought additional bulk. He's a far cry from the Max Payne we knew before – the city clobber Max, in his dress shoes, slacks, tie and smart jacket. No, the new Max is a broken man; weary, violent and damaged. But although he's lost his hair, his razor, and his inclination to put on a collared shirt, he hasn't quite lost his edge. This will prove handy, since trouble has a habit of finding him.

THE BOYS FROM BRAZIL

After picking up the series from Remedy, Rockstar has brought development in-house. Rockstar Vancouver, the Canuck studio behind *Bully* – or *Canis Canem Edit* as it was also known (although only in Europe and Australia, and only on PS2 – fishy) – is lead on this project and responsible for Max's new attitude and direction. *Max Payne 3* leaves the dark, rain-slicked streets of New York behind and heads south to São Paulo, Brazil. He's scored some private security work through some dodgy connections for one of the city's wealthy families. Rockstar is naturally still a shade cagey





36 MODERN WARFARE 2
More impressions on the shooter to end all shooters!



38 MAFIA II
The best-looking underworld adventure of 2010 exposed!



39 DJ HERO
The full scoop on this new change of tempo for music games!



40 DARKSIDERS
Apocalyptic action on a scorched Earth. Hands-on with the slasher from Hell!



MAX POWER

- 15% *Die Hard with a Vengeance*
- 30% *Man on Fire*
- 25% *City of God*
- 25% Anything by John Woo, except *Paycheck*
- 5% *Growin' a Beard*

It has left New York, but the noir style remains

Everything is cooler in slow motion

BULLET IN THE BRAIN

Fortunately, Max remains equipped to deal with the tidal wave of trouble coming his way. *Max Payne 3* retains many of the franchise's trademarks, and Bullet Time is one of them – but we should expect something even better. Eight years on from the release of the original, slo-mo 'focus' modes have been done to death, so the challenge for Rockstar Vancouver is to put Max back on top of the heap. It's going to be slow, it's going to be incredibly detailed and it's going to have the tech that powers *GTA IV* and *Red Dead Redemption* humming under it all. We're already a little giddy with anticipation to see how the highly realistic Euphoria Engine displays super-slow motion impacts on hapless goons. There's also a second slow-mo mechanic being referred to internally, for now, as 'Environmental Bullet Time'. These are not unlike the conventional quick-time events you see in many other action games in that they occur where the developer dictates, although the key difference is that you're in control at all times. You'll be able to use the slowed speed to pull off moves and shot that would be impossible in real time.

These days, Max can also take cover and grab human shields. Rockstar has been quick to stress these aren't necessarily crucial, rather they're just more options for players of differing styles.

More as we get it. **Luke Reilly**

WE SAY

- ↑ **Hard-boiled action returns**
- ↑ **RAGE, Euphoria... sweet**
- ↓ **New style may polarise**

OPS IS...
observing approvingly



on the plot, but needless to say the gig goes sour and Max finds himself neck-deep in the São Paulo underworld, fighting for his life.

The choice of São Paulo as a setting isn't the result of stabbing a finger on a spinning globe either. Abhor it or otherwise, but the *Max Payne* series is about gun violence. If you want gun violence you needn't go further than Brazil. With one gun for every 75 people in the country (and 95% of them acquired illegally) it's no wonder Brazil sits among the top 20 countries by intentional homicide rate. That rate is 25.7 murders per 100,000 members of population. By comparison, in Australia the rate is 1.45. In fact, according to a report from the United Nations, more than 500,000 people have been killed by firearms in Brazil between 1979 and 2003. To put that in perspective, that's everyone who lives on the Sunshine Coast murdered, in 24 years. Twice. That shit is bananas.

“Abhor it or otherwise, but the *Max Payne* series is about gun violence. If you want gun violence you needn't go further than Brazil”

IT'S LIKE...

Mercenaries 2



Fuel TV



TWO WHEELS
AND A HELMET
NEVER LOOKED
SO GOOD.

MADITUN
Joel Park
world num
semi-final

MORE



PS3 GENRE: ACTION | RELEASE: JUNE 2010 | DISTRIBUTOR: TBC | DEVELOPER: AVALANCHE STUDIOS

JUST CAUSE 2

Welcome to the jungle

It's hard to resist a tropical paradise. When you see images of pristine waters, long sandy beaches and vibrant greens all roasting under a cloudless sky you swell with positive emotions. You close your eyes and instantly you're drunk on cocktails, frolicking in the shore-break with a hot local while a flock of peeping parrots hum old Elvis tunes. So when a game breaks through the drab apocalyptic greys that infest most of our action games with these happy tones you long for it to be great. But for every *Uncharted*, there is a *Haze*... so where did the original *Just Cause* fit in?

Right, smack, bang in the middle! The original *Just Cause* had all the elements of awesome in place, but it wasn't one seamless gaming experience. Its great ideas were glued lazily into place and you could definitely see the cracks, and feel the bumps, as the gameplay moved between each feature. But rather than just air-brushing out the gremlins and quickly releasing a sequel, Avalanche Studios has spent a healthy four years giving the gameplay the attention it needs to raise it to *Uncharted*'s level.

Rico Rodriguez returns from the first game,

but the action has moved out of the Caribbean and to the equally as pretty, if culturally polar, Southeast Asia and the fictional island of Panau. This slice of tropical heaven is under the merciless rule of dictator Baby Panay and Rico is out to undermine his power by any means necessary. Strangely, he does not have official CIA backing this time around, and will need to find his own weapons, gadgets and vehicles through the black market. Told with the perfect amount of action hero bravado and sliced cheddar it's sure to be an explosive ride. The gameplay recalls the likes of *Mercenaries 2* and *Red Faction: Guerrilla*, with narrative progression driven by destruction. You need to 'buy' mission objectives by first causing chaos in areas controlled by Baby Panay's goons. You might, for example, come across an enemy outpost and blow the place to smithereens before killing everything that moves just to build up enough chaos to activate a story mission. And it is as fun as it sounds.

That in large part due to your grappling hook, easily one of the most bitchin' gadgets ever given to a game hero. You can latch onto

anything and pull yourself towards it which is great for quickly zipping about the world and it is now flawlessly integrated into every moment of the gameplay: you don't need to equip it... in fact you can use as you are firing!

You can also throw out your parasail as you slingshot to a location which throws you into the air, at which point you can fire your weapons, grapple to a new location or effortlessly jump from the air into a vehicle. During one mission we latched onto a passing vehicle and then activated the parasail in order to be shot up into the air. We then launched an aerial RPG attack as we made use of the nimble stunt-like controls of the parachute to manoeuvre around. Just for giggles, we then landed on a different vehicle, shot out the driver as we clung off the back of the jeep and then took control of it for ourselves. It was as epic as any Hollywood blockbuster's action scene, but controlled fluidly by the user.

In addition, the grappling hook has an all-new feature which is just so outrageously funny



Your car's backfiring a bit...

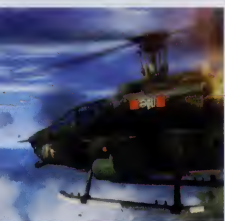




“The gameplay recalls the likes of *Mercenaries 2* and *Red Faction: Guerrilla*, with narrative progression driven by destruction”



“Hope you don't mind if I just drop in”



“Was I meant to set that on fire?”

YOU'RE GOING TO NEED A BIGGER BOAT

Developers are going large in this generation. With open streaming worlds now the norm rather than the exception, it seems like developers are trying to prove their e-peen through the sheer size of their game worlds. Sometimes it's just folly (*Fuel*), other times it's necessary (*GTAV*), but either way it is hard not to be impressed when you see the world map on some of these games for the first time. In our 30 minutes of play time with *Just Cause 2* we thought we covered a lot of ground. We drove boats, engaged in a long car chases, base jumped off cliffs and so much more. At the end of the half hour, the Avalanche dudes brought up a world map and showed us how much ground we had covered. It was but a pin prick: jaw dropping stuff. Panau is big – Chris Farley big – going from snowy mountain peaks right down into the crystal waters, across deserts and even into a proper city!

and kickass it should come with a warning. If you attach one end of the grabbling hook to an object, and the other end to another object, the two will come crashing together. You can attach one baddie to another and watch them crash furiously into each other, or attach a baddie to an exploding barrel and watch him get nuked. It's even funnier if one of the objects is stationary. In one hilarious moment we attached an enemy vehicle that was chasing us to a beam on a passing bridge which caused the vehicle to suddenly get coat-hangered and its occupants were sent flying. At another point a jeep was tethered to the end of a helicopter and then used as a wrecking ball. Rad!

Just Cause 2 looks a treat, too. During the four-year hiatus the developer has evolved to a new middleware engine called Avalanche 2.0 which has not only sugared up the eye candy big time, but has completely rebuilt all the base elements of the gameplay. We spoke in detail with the developer about our camera concerns in the first game and were assured that not only were they aware that this was a problem, but that they had started from scratch on getting it

right for the sequel. The AI has also been totally rebuilt with a focus on getting them to act as a team, and plan their combat intelligently.

The game just looks and feels the business. If you could see the cracks in the first game, here the big ideas come together in the one seamless game experience, fulfilling the potential we saw in the original. When you're base jumping off the tops of mountains, and parachuting directly into a wild fire-fight hundreds of metres below, leaping from vehicle to vehicle as explosions billow all about you, you'll have that beaming smile that only comes when you're in paradise. Gaming paradise that is! **Chris Stead**

WE SAY

- Fluid and diverse gameplay
- Visually spectacular
- Grappling hook is gold

OPS IS...
Packing its mankind!



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INCOMING

Modern Warfare 2

“Taking out an enemy on a snowmobile, you jump on the vehicle and begin hurtling down the mountain, one hand steering and the other shooting at enemy troops as they swarm after you”

PS3 GENRE: SHOOTER | RELEASE: NOVEMBER 2009 | DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION | DEVELOPER: INFINITY WARD

MODERN WARFARE 2

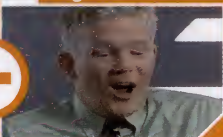
Awesome times infinity

IT'S LIKE...

Standard shooter



Orgasm



Is *Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare* the greatest game of this generation thus far? Some will most certainly argue the case. Despite being two years old it can still stand toe-to-toe visually with anything that has been released since. Its visceral and personal storytelling style is as memorable and engaging as anything we've ever experienced. The gameplay is so acutely finetuned that it offers not only a stellar single player campaign, but one of the most revered and played online experiences of all time. It marks *Modern Warfare 2* as THE sequel of the year, and one of the highlights of our backstage E3 tour.

Modern Warfare 2 looks freakishly good. When questioned, the developer explained that it runs on the IW4.0 game engine, a generation beyond what we saw in both the original, and

last year's *World at War*. The focus has been on bringing even greater realism to the animations, providing far more detailed characters models and weapons, enhancing the lighting and getting the whole thing running at 1080p. It can also handle streaming textures, which allows for much bigger worlds and the potential for less linear gameplay. They're subtle enhancements, but reveal an artist in Infinity Ward perfecting its work rather than looking to wipe the canvas clean. *Modern Warfare 2* is poetry in motion.

We also applaud the decision to continue along the same narrative tangent begun in *Modern Warfare*. This is a true sequel, set several years after the conclusion of *COD4*. After a period of relative quiet, trouble is brewing again in Russia. Vladimir Makarov has emerged as a new leader for the Russian Ultranationalists, building a following by turning Imran Zakhaev (who died in the first game) into a martyr. Feeling the threat, the powers of good form Task Force 141 led by our old friend Soap MacTavish (now a Captain) to put an end to it all. As Sergeant Gary "Roach" Sanderson, you're part of the Task Force, and you're in for a wild ride. Literally.

One early mission has you infiltrating an enemy base high up in the Tian Shan Ranges of Kazakhstan during a fierce blizzard. You blow up your objective and then make a dramatic escape. Taking out an enemy on a snowmobile, you jump on the vehicle and begin hurtling down the mountain, one hand steering and the other shooting at enemy troops as they swarm after you. Trees whiz past dangerously, bullets, explosions and crashing vehicles fill your peripherals and the tension pounds in your head. It's a classic Infinity Ward action sequence and it reveals another one of the engine enhancements: the ability to control vehicles. Not only that, it is all physics based, with the new middleware allowing you to feel every change in gradient and every bump in the snow through the controller!

Earlier in the mission we were also introduced to a new stealth component to the *COD* gameplay, where the user can choose to keep hidden and use a motion tracker to creep up and take out enemies one at a time, nice and quiet like. Using the blizzard as cover and accessing the base by climbing up a sheer ice



"Race you to the island!"



BIGGER THAN JESUS?

Think GTA is the biggest game series on Earth? Think again. While last generation Rockstar's mighty open-world saga was untouchable, this generation the crown belongs to *Call of Duty*. According to VGChartz, *Call of Duty 2* sold 2.42 million copies worldwide on next-gen consoles, despite being a port of an old-gen game. *Call of Duty 3* managed 4.18m. Then came the big one: *Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare*, which threw the series into the big time with 11.89m. *World at War* was next up and is already at 10.13m sales, and has only been on sale for eight months at the time of writing. That's 28.62m combined! By comparison, *GTAIV*, the only game in the series to come out this generation, sold 12.76m, and it was bundled with consoles on release. It is no wonder than analysts are predicting *Modern Warfare 2* to be the biggest selling game of 2009, even though it doesn't come out until November!

That guy is actually 20 metres tall



Christ the Redeemer, preparing for the world's most unexpected stage dive

cliff face, we were informed that stealth was a choice, not a necessity, and the gamer was free to tackle the mission in a different way. It opens up intriguing possibilities through the rest of the game, especially considering the variation.

Joining the Kazakhstan Mountains, other expected missions will unfold in Russia, Afghanistan, underwater, via the AC-130 Spectre Gunship and, particularly exciting, in the dangerous favela slums of Rio de Janeiro. The gameplay glimpses we've seen of this last environment reveal a massive shift in focus for the *Call of Duty* series. They suggest combat in streets filled not only with enemies, but with citizens.

While Infinity Ward has not explicitly mentioned it, we're willing to bet that a large component of what the new IW4.0 game engine can do is handle this third element: the civilian. It will obviously require a whole new AI architecture to react to the combat in realistic ways as a non-volatile force. It also opens the door for some spectacular terrorism inspired action scenes as your Task Force is dropped into the guts of active, urban landscapes during the panic of a terrorist outbreak. What the developer has mentioned is that they've put a lot of work into getting the AI to use the environment to their advantage both defensively and offensively.

They'll even try and get to elevated positions to get a good bead on you.

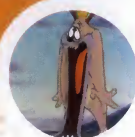
As for multiplayer, we can confirm that there will be a co-op mode but disappointingly it will not involve the actual campaign. Disappointing because *World at War* did have a co-op campaign. But Infinity Ward explained to us that they simply weren't willing to make the graphical and action set-piece concessions to the single player experience to allow for a second player to be involved. Instead, we will get a host of standalone co-op tasks in the vein of the original's bonus Mile High Club mission.

Either way, it is hard not to be impressed. If *COD4:MW* is the best game of this generation, then we reckon it will only hold onto its crown 'til about, oh, November 10. **Chris Stead**

WE SAY

- ↑ Great engine improvements
- ↑ Killer new locations
- ↓ No campaign co-op

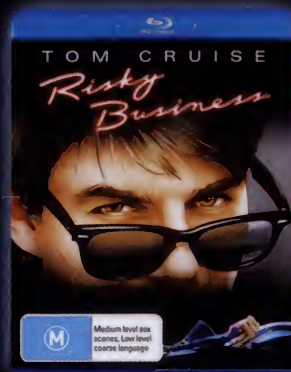
OPS IS...
Picking up its jaw



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THE PERFECT ILLUSION

Mafia II is powered by the all new Illusion Engine which – in a partnership similar to *GTAIV*'s RAGE and *Euphoria* engines – utilises PhysX technology to handle the in-game physics. Together they create a masterful open-world vibrant with life, activity and effects. We're impressed with its ability to deliver a detailed streaming world (including travelling from outside to inside buildings), large numbers of active NPCs, complex lighting, weather effects, cinematic in-game cut-scenes, destructible environments buoyed by dynamic objects and the smooth animation. It's a stunner!



➤ This bloke, obviously, has no arms



➤ Snow accumulates on cars in winter



PS3 GENRE: ACTION | RELEASE: EARLY 2010 | DISTRIBUTOR: 2K | DEVELOPER: 2K CZECH

MAFIA II

A game you cannot refuse?

IT'S LIKE...

➤ Goodfellas



➤ GTA



You can blame Francis Ford Coppola. His *Godfather* trilogy romanticised the violent, criminal underbelly of the industrialisation of America through the early- and mid-1900s so effectively that the subject matter has become a catalyst for grand storytelling and riveting character tales ever since. It inspired *Mafia's* tale of lowly taxi driver Thomas Angelo's impromptu life in organised crime during the 1930s prohibition era, and its scope is only matched by the eight-year wait for a sequel: a wait that has seen a lot of change.

Mafia II is less a homage to the great gangster stories of the silver screen and more its own distinct tale with a new setting, and new characters. It is set in a fictional mash of New York City and San Francisco called Empire Bay (roughly twice as big as *Mafia's* Lost Heaven) during the late '40s and early '50s. The story centres around American-Italian immigrant Vito Scaletta, a man who returns from WWII in poverty and, with old friend Joe Barbaro, sets his sights on organised crime to fulfil dreams of a life outside the slums for himself and his family. Excitingly, as you progress through



➤ "I swear, it was like that when I got here"

the narrative you will be forced to make important choices that will lead you down different paths to various endings. The fact that it's set primarily in the '50s also opens the door for more advanced weaponry and cars, which speeds the gameplay up beyond that of the '30s-set original. Culturally there is more relevance to our current society too, with booze legal and rock 'n roll filling the airwaves.

There are plenty of nods to genre leader *GTAIV* (plot communication during drives, a full cover system, diverse mission activities), but where that was something of a random experience, *Mafia II* is more directed; you're part of organised crime after all, and things like jacking cars, stealing weapons and buying suits just aren't as relevant. That stuff comes to you. You even need to lay low after missions, with weeks or even months passing between gameplay moments.

The combat is a key focus of the game and quite incredible, playing more like a proper third-person shooter (think *Ghost Recon*) than an open-world game. We certainly like the inclusions of a regenerating health system by which you heal when in cover (no health packs)

and a dual wanted system: one for you and one for your car. *Driver: Parallel Lines* had a similar mechanic, and we're surprised it took this long to be copied. Also quite rad is the dynamic radio: if you are driving serenely around the city the music will be all low tempo stuff, but get in a chase and the next song will be more rockin'.

There is something comforting about the idea of family, honour and power even if, in this age of the gangsta, it is often misguided. With *The Godfather* games proving to be hit and miss, the door is open for *Mafia* to sneak in and bootleg the action we want, in a world we desire. **Chris Stead**

WE SAY

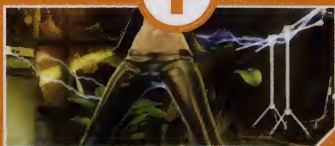
- Amazing visuals
- Great combat
- Engaging story

OPS IS...
Leaving Liberty City



IT'S LIKE...

Beatmania



Guitar Hero



DJ Tanner from Full House Lady doesn't appear



Puma pants. Wait, you what in your pants?



ROLL OVER DJ

DJ Gee Papa (George Papapetrou) set a world record for the longest club DJ marathon when he played for a massive 116 hours at Dot Club in Nicosia, Cyprus. This eclipses the previous record of 88 hours, set in 2006 by Agustin E. Gonzalez Aguilar of Mexico. Epic.

PS3 GENRE: MUSIC | RELEASE: OCTOBER 2009 | DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION | DEVELOPER: FREESTYLEGAMES

DJ HERO

One turntable and no microphone

Activision's music games are undoubtedly a full-blown franchise, having progressed beyond being a string of guitar-related titles with band-name suffixes and numbers into a two-guitars-and-drums-and-vocals rock outfit, and is now dipping in to DJ territory. The branding across these two lines of music games mirrors one another, from the stream of icons that float down-screen indicating what button to press and when, as well as the exaggerated characters performing in the background, to the font on the box. Its style of play is pervasive, and has escaped the confines of 'gamer' culture: you'd be hard pressed to find someone who hasn't heard of *Guitar Hero*.

Despite the similarities, *DJ Hero* is a brand new game with a brand new device needed to play the game, although there will be a DJ versus guitar mode. *DH's* turntable, like the guitar that preceded it, is a stripped-back version of its real-life counterpart whilst still retaining the core of the original instrument. Despite the static nature of playing on a turntable (we're yet to see showman-like DJs mix vinyl with a set of decks

flailing behind their heads whilst strutting around a stage) gameplay here is more dynamic; a contribution of the tracks you'll have to perform and the physical structure of the 'table. The platter, used for scratching, spins 360° but keeps three face buttons that represent the two tracks that are mixed throughout the performance as well as samples/effects flourishes, alterable via the effects dial located on the panel next to the platter. Switching between the two tracks is achieved by the cross fader, whilst a 'Euphoria' button, also on the side panel, is the *DH* equivalent of 'Star Power'. Expect the 'table to demand more from your finger-picking hand as you flick the platter while tapping face buttons, and sending the crossfader back and forth.

The set list and talent involved is impressive. Big names like DJ Shadow, Jay-Z and Cut Chemist have been brought on board to provide mixes specifically for *DJ Hero*: you won't hear these anywhere else. It means that this is going to be harder to play than *GH*. *Guitar Hero* rolled out a track that was familiar, chosen for its popularity, status, or impact on the

musical landscape, the button presses corresponding in a mostly logical perception to how it could be played on a real axe. In *DJ Hero* you're not matching buttons to correspond with the notes in the songs, you're playing as the DJ who created that particular remix, though the buttons and movements you make are no more or less arbitrary than those of its guitar sibling. The battle for what's cooler, playing a pretend guitar or a pretend turntable, has already begun.

Paul Taylor

WE SAY

- Unique remixes
- DJ versus guitar
- Yet another peripheral?

OPS IS...
Spinning the black circle



INCOMING

Darksiders

IT'S LIKE...

Kratos



Bad attitude

INFOBYTE

Everyone's favourite Jedi, Mark Hamill, who just can't seem to get enough voice-over work, lend his dulcet tones to The Watcher.

War is about to become a landing smear

How to open a pistachio

He's lost the plot. What, there's a cemetery on his back!

PS3 GENRE: ACTION | RELEASE: TBC 2009 | DISTRIBUTOR: THQ | DEVELOPER: VIGIL GAMES

DARKSIDERS

Are you ready for War?

There are certain things you just don't want to be wrong about. You know, those rolls of the dice that you really shouldn't chance, like trusting whether or not that lambskin condom you've nestled in your wallet since '94 is good to go, or spending a weekend with that Thai "lady of the night" you met with hands bigger than your own, or jumping into the

back of that dodgy old guy's van to get yourself some candy. Some things just ain't worth the risk. Blaming one of the Four Horsemen for kicking off the Apocalypse before its time, that's at the top, and someone's gonna pay.

The Four Horsemen, says the game's story, were sent to trigger the end of the world prematurely, and War takes the brunt of the blame from an impartial council. After being stripped of all his "end of the world" powers, War is rather unceremoniously dumped in what's left of our planet, about 100 years after its end, and charged with uncovering whose hands between the realms of Heaven and Hell have been busy behind the scenes. But he's not alone. You can't let a Rottweiler off a leash without expecting trouble. So keeping our boy in check is a mysterious entity known as The Watcher, who observes his every action, and has the power to end War's existence if the situation demands it.

As you're wandering the remains of Earth, you'll come across different factions: it may be some of the Fallen (humans who no longer have a sense of humanity), sniffing out a demon of biblical proportions, or even temporarily aligning yourself with a small pocket of Angels leading the Resistance, you'll hack and slash your way to the truth, slowly regaining your immense powers.

So far we've seen War pitch cars on demon heads, use various creatures as a scabbard for

his mighty sword, take flight with a shadowy pair of wings, utilise a glaive like instrument for ranged attacks and solving some noodle scratching puzzles, roll gangsta with some old school gats, and even get his grapple on with a *Bionic Commando*-style hook. The caper was unleashing his true demonic form (dwarfing his regular self) and laying waste to anything and everything in his path. War's also adept in firing a mighty cannon, and we took a lot of pleasure in using it for both point blank demon slaying and sniper opportunities.

We dig the way *Darksiders* is shaping up; War makes Kratos look soft, has a range of kick-arse implements of death and destruction and isn't afraid to use them. Plus, his fiery steed, Ruin, is a welcome inclusion. We've chalked out our pentagram, sacrificed a goat and drank its blood: now bring on the Apocalypse! **Dave Kozicki**

WE SAY

- Huge environments
- Killer weaponry
- Challenging puzzles

OPS IS...
Fired up!

MAD-MAN

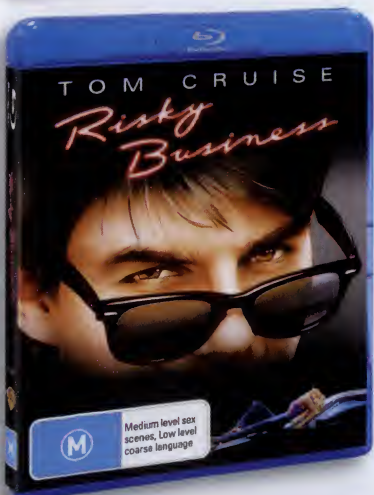
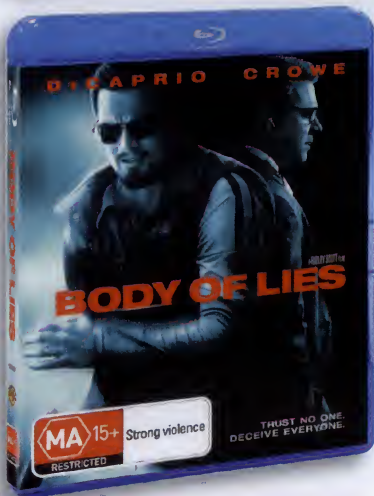
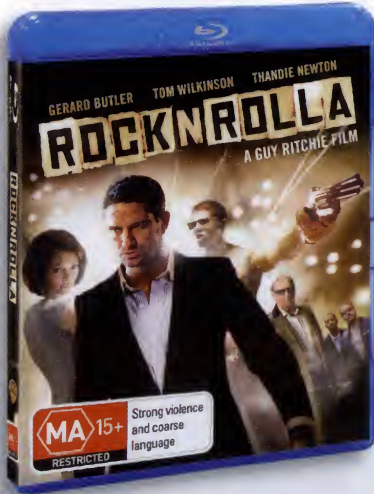
You may find yourself visually arrested by the characters and general graphics polish. That ain't no accident. Comic book artisan Joe Madureira is responsible for the designs which are chock full of awesome. After cutting his teeth in the industry on various *X-Men* titles, he broke out with *Battle Chasers*, a sprawling sword and sorcery epic. Known for his trademark chunky armour and gravity defying female physiques, aficionados would notice his distinct style in almost every facet of *Darksiders*.

OUT OF THE BLU!

To mark the release of its first BD-Live title, *300*, Warner Bros. and OPS are giving away 10 fantastic Blu-ray prize packs to 10 lucky readers.

Each pack contains the brand-new BD-Live edition of *300*, plus the classic *Risky Business* and *Falling Down* and 2009 hits *Body of Lies* and *RocknRolla*.

To enter, tell us what your favourite scene is from any of these films and why, in 25 words or less. Entry details on page 24.



- **TWO HOURS OF EXTRAS!**
- **COMPREHENSIVE IMMERSION**
Interactive picture-in-picture experience provides three unique perspectives to explore while you watch the film
- **40-PAGE BLU-RAY BOOK**
Full colour publication packed with insider information and photos!
- **ADDITIONAL FEATURES VIA WARNER BROS. BD-LIVE™**

BD-Live is a newly developed Blu-ray feature that enables you to access content via your internet-connected Blu-ray player or PlayStation 3. BD-Live can allow you to download a variety of exclusive and updated content, and will enable peer to peer interaction and live events.

INCOMING

The Beatles: Rock Band

IT'S LIKE...

Um, The Beatles



Er, Rock Band



PS3 GENRE: MUSIC | RELEASE: SEPTEMBER 2009 | DISTRIBUTOR: EA | DEVELOPER: HARMONIX

THE BEATLES: ROCK BAND

All you need is love...

Our excitement continues to build around Harmonix's latest *Rock Band* project, mainly because it just looks so freaking cool. Really, it does.

We gave credit where credit was due to the impressive presentation of *Guitar Hero: Metallica*, where admirable attention to detail really captured the spirit of the hard-hitting heavyweights – but *The Beatles: Rock Band* is on an entirely different level. However, we banged on about that last issue.

What we haven't mentioned is that the game will include 45 master tracks plucked from 12 of The Beatles albums recorded with EMI Records. Never-before-heard studio chatter will also be included. 'Back in the U.S.S.R.', 'Day Tripper', 'Get Back', 'Here Comes the Sun', 'I Am the Walrus', 'I Feel Fine', 'I Saw Her Standing There', 'I Want to Hold Your Hand', 'Octopus's Garden' and 'Taxman' have been

confirmed to appear, and 'Twist and Shout', 'A Hard Day's Night' and 'Paperback Writer' are not officially listed but can be heard during the game's beautiful opening cinematic.

The inevitable question about whether any potential estate sale following the death of Michael Jackson (who owned 50% of the publishing rights to The Beatles songs through Sony/ATV) would affect the project in some form has been put forward, but *The Beatles: Rock Band* will not be impeded by any legal to-and-fro following the king of pop's shock check-out.

It's also worth reporting that downloadable content for *The Beatles: Rock Band* will not be playable on other *Rock Band* titles, or vice-versa. The songs contained on *The Beatles: Rock Band* disc will not be exportable to other games in the *Rock Band* series either. According to Harmonix the game's new vocal three-part harmony feature (as well as the unique song-specific animations) prevent this from being feasible.

— Luke Reilly



WE SAY

- ↑ Three-part harmonies
- ↑ Remarkable presentation
- ↓ Elvis > The Beatles?



OPS IS...
The walrus



PS3 GENRE: ACTION | RELEASE: MID 2010 | DISTRIBUTOR: THQ | DEVELOPER: CAPCOM

LOST PLANET 2

Co-op, mechs, jungles... oh my

He loves the smell of napalm in the morning

PlayStation owners kind of missed out with *Lost Planet: Extreme Condition*.

An underrated gem on X360, it was delayed on PS3 before being ported crudely across by developer K2 LLC (who?) with sub-par results. Not this time. For the sequel Capcom is giving Sony's machine equal billing and what's more, the early signs mark this is as a big blockbuster. With the emphasis on big!

The action unfolds ten years after the original on the planet E.D.N. III which after a period of global warming now hosts rivers and jungles as well as extreme snow conditions.

Primarily you'll be combating the native and even more formidable Akrid beasts as

part of a team of four. In the single player, your three teammates are AI controlled, but ideally you can take the action online and go at it all in co-op. We've tested this out and utilising team strategies is great fun. In particular, the Mech-like Vital Suits return with the ability for all four of you to ride them at once – its nice!

We mentioned big before and we meant it. Capcom loves titanic battles and the bosses revealed so far for *Lost Planet 2* hog the screen more than a Will Ferrell cameo. They could scare a Wookiee right out of its carpet and teaming up to take them down is riotous gameplay. Visually these moments make for some spectacle, while the new jungle

sections also clash wonderfully with the frozen wastelands to ensure this one gets a tick in the god-damn-yes-I-want-it box. **Chris Stead**

WE SAY

- ↑ Epic boss battles
- ↑ Online co-op
- ↓ No split-screen co-op

OPS IS...
Hunting T-ENG



PS3 GENRE: RACING | RELEASE: MID 2010 | DISTRIBUTOR: MADMAN | DEVELOPER: BLACK ROCK STUDIO

SPLIT/SECOND

From the creators of *Pure* comes...

The first trailer for *Split/Second* was so hot that if you watched it with your shoes out in front of you the rubber would get all soft, melt a little and smell like squid fart. It revealed plans for a frantic racer where drivers were forced to not only navigate around twisting, obstacle filled circuits at thunderous speeds but also deal with environmental attacks. This included cranes dropping objects on you, tanks exploding, planes crashing from the sky and water gushing suddenly across the track. We saw it and thought, "Well that was sick – wonder what the game is actually like though?"

Then we went to E3 and got behind closed doors with the game. And guess what? It plays just like the trailer – we shit you not!

Ultimately your goal, like any racer, is to reach the finish line first. The x-factor in *Split/Second* is that the game allows you to cheat. Similar to the trick meter in *Pure*, the better you perform the more your Powerplay Meter – that has three levels – builds up. Each level gives you access to a more powerful cheat. Mild cheats might involve something exploding near another player, or opening up a shortcut, whereas bigger cheats can have dramatic course altering effects that are not only visually impressive but change the whole dynamic of

the race. The strategy involves deciding when to activate these cheats – you don't want to jump the gun early, or wait too long and watch a competitor use it first. Sure to be a multiplayer classic. **Chris Stead**

WE SAY

- ↑ Original gameplay
- ↑ Offline multiplayer
- ↓ Worried about variation

OPS IS...
Burning dust



Bringing down the house. Not just a shit Steve Martin movie



INCOMING

Gran Turismo 5

Thelma and Louise go rallying

PS3 GENRE: RACING | RELEASE: TBA 2009 | DISTRIBUTOR: SONY | DEVELOPER: POLYPHONY DIGITAL

GRAN TURISMO 5

Still on the hoist

IT'S LIKE...

Gran Turismo



Glacial drift

Details on the driving simulator to end all driving simulators remain stupidly scarce. Each time we sense we're getting closer to some new information Polyphony Digital's ridiculously mysterious title vanishes back into the shadows.

A variety of GT5-related rumours continue to circulate – some of which haven't been reported on thus far within this magazine.

Rampant release date speculation has flared up again, with dates as early as September 25 touted by various international retailers. While it's looking increasingly likely GT5 will arrive before the end of the year, September 25 would place the release of GT5

before the release of *Gran Turismo* for PSP and seems tremendously improbable.

Still, GT founding father Kazunori Yamauchi has repeated his claim that Polyphony Digital, hypothetically, could release GT5 whenever they want. In an interview with the Scandinavian magazine *Gamereactor* Yamauchi again claimed: "We've actually reached a point where we can probably release it any time, except that you can also keep working on it as long as you want to, as well, so it's just a matter of timing. What really is the most important is that we keep working on it until we're satisfied with the final product."

Reports indicate GT5 has cost 50 times more to develop than the original *Gran Turismo*, but it's no wonder. In the time between GT4 and GT5 (if it launches before Christmas) Microsoft will have released *Forza Motorsport*, *Forza Motorsport 2* and *Forza Motorsport 3*, EA will have released no fewer than five *Need for Speed* titles and Codemasters has released two *Colin McRae* games and two *Race Driver* games. We don't doubt GT5 will be worth the wait, but it doesn't make it any easier! **Luke Reilly**

Damage may apparently be limited to race cars



This car could go now. It just chooses not to



These cars could overtake each other. They're just waiting

WE SAY

- ↑ Photo-realistic beauty
- ↑ WRC, NASCAR and *Top Gear*
- ↓ Just release it!

OPS IS...
waiting patiently



It doesn't matter if you're black and/or white

PS3 GENRE: ACTION | RELEASE: NOVEMBER | DISTRIBUTOR: EA | DEVELOPER: PANDEMIC

THE SABOTEUR

Fierce is the red amongst the black

The Saboteur is at once awesomely original, and strangely familiar. It's set in an open-world Paris during WWII, where Irish race driver Sean Devlin is living under Nazi occupation. At first nonchalant about the war, when his friends are killed by the invading forces he sets off on a mission for revenge. It's a rad idea offering a unique narrative perspective on WWII as we ride with Sean from punk to hero, as well as the diversity of an open-world experience in an era usually reserved for linear action.

When you play the game for the first time, it's the brilliant visual direction which initially hits you, powered by the all new Odin Engine. Nazi occupied areas appear in black and white,

before being vibrantly brought to life as Sean's actions inspire the citizens to fight back. And don't let the black and white fool you: it is astonishingly detailed and gorgeous, recalling cult classics *Okami* and *Sin City*.

The gameplay delivers an intriguing bipolar experience. As a saboteur, many of your missions are focused on *Hitman*-esque stealth mechanics as you sneak about planting bombs, dressing up in disguise and assassinating targets, all facilitated by an *inFamous*-like climbing ability. Once you pull the trigger though, it's action overdrive. And as you slowly sabotage the German occupation of the Paris neighbourhoods, the enemy presence thins out

and the citizens begin to take up arms. As a developer Pandemic has long been on the cusp of greatness; this could be the one!

Chris Stead

WE SAY

- ↑ Great visual style
- ↑ Cool story
- ↓ No multiplayer

OPS IS...
Living in colour



PS3 GENRE: ACTION | RELEASE: DEC 2009 | DISTRIBUTOR: EA | DEVELOPER: EA MONTREAL

ARMY OF TWO: THE 40TH DAY

It's the buddy action game of the summer

Too much 'big idea' and not enough 'focus on the little things' – that was the original's problem. The sequel is – like a cat's anus – a much tighter affair. The two gruff, '80s-era mercenaries from the original find themselves in Shanghai as it falls under attack from a terrorist initiative called The 40th Day and they need to make an escape through a collapsing, panicking city filled with both enemies and civilians.

The narrative scale is intense. One epic sequence sees a skyscraper collapse in front of you and billow dust and debris amidst fleeing humans – but it is the fine tuning of the gameplay which has us hyped. The partner AI has been worked on heavily, the controls have been streamlined, you can now carry four weapons including those of felled enemies, the environment reacts realistically (think bullet penetration of walls) and you can issue orders to your partner. All good.

Gameplay also offers far more diversity. The game engine will automatically throw you into cover when you approach it, and you can use enemies as shields. You'll also encounter moral dilemmas where you'll need to choose whether to 'do the right thing' or 'be a dick', choices that can cost civilian lives and affect the storyline. Weapon customisation has been really ramped



↑ "I owe you a fist-bump!"

up, with you able to combine components from any gun as well as adding visual flair. Naturally the focus is still on co-op, and you and your partner will need to compliment each other's weapons as well as pull fancy flanking manoeuvres using the returning Aggro Meter, and new tricks like feigning surrender. In short, more gameplay, less lameplay. Chris Stead


WE SAY

- ↑ Great new setting
- ↑ Polished gameplay
- ↑ Awesome co-op

OPS IS...
Looking for a friend



Words: James Ellis



“Feedback was in two flavours – frustrations and requests. We’ve worked hard to remove as many frustrations and add as many requests as we could”

KING OF THE BOOT

Last year's *FIFA 09* lofted EA's wily veteran back to the golden throne of football dominance. But the EA team aren't about to sit on their laces and have promised a flurry of new improvements to blast *FIFA 10* into the roof of the net. With *FIFA 10* Producer David Rutter on hand to speak with *OPS*, we find out exactly what footy fanatics have to look forward to.

How the hell does anyone improve on something as sweet as *FIFA 09*? After years of sitting in the little league watching Konami's *Pro Evolution Soccer* dominate the paddock, EA's aging veteran turned Lazarus and made a comeback to slide tackle Seabass's little upstart into the back of an ambulance. Not only did it feature looks that made footballers wives look sallow, but EA Canada had completed a bang-up job fixing the game's mechanics – a process they'd admittedly begun in *FIFA 08*. Yes, it was the balls. And the people rejoiced.

Ironically, it was because of all this rejoicing – specifically that over 400 million games of *FIFA 09* have been played online since the game's launch – that small chinks in the game's armour were pointed out.

David Rutter would know. As producer of both *FIFA 09* and now *FIFA 10*, he's been privy to the constant cries of footballers the world over. We caught up with him recently about what gamers found lacking.

"Feedback was in two flavours – frustrations and requests," he says. "We've worked hard to remove as many frustrations and add as many requests as we could.

"Major frustrations would be scoring from

kick-off, too many offsides, the advantage rule not working that well, and a host of other game imbalances. We've fixed or improved the vast majority of these throughout the game.

"Requests have also been popular. This year we're really proud of the work we've put into Manager Mode at our community's request. Over 50 major components to do with match realism, transfer authenticity, and player growth and development have been addressed, and that's something we'll continue to focus on in coming years.

"In addition we've added a Practice Mode that's load free, includes set pieces, and allows AI players on the pitch. You can play up to 11 outfield players, and it supports offline multiplayer. 4 v 4 has been christened 'Death Mode' by some of our community members.

"There's a load of other things we've done too in response to feedback."

Wow. It's a fair wallop of effort. It's also particularly impressive – and critical – that Rutter's team aren't just a pack of pasty programmers, but also love the sport themselves. They even have their own bloody football field to play on while thinking through the next big improvement. So if they're all football fans what was the first thing the

team wanted fixed for *FIFA 10*?

"Outside of Manager Mode it was player control or set pieces," says Rutter. "We really wanted to raise the bar for our set pieces this year, and one of the coolest things we've only just started talking about is our created custom set pieces. From the practice arena you'll be able to record up to four totally personalised free kicks in eight quadrants. The two quadrants by the corner flag will correspond to both free kicks and corners in those areas. You select players with the right stick, then move them around with the left stick like in standard play. Then you'll be able to record multiple player movements, edit paths, assign each kick to the D-pad, and trigger them in game."

It's a feature that sounds particularly effective, potentially too much so. Premeditating the concern, Rutter adds that they're still chatting about whether this feature should be included in online play.

Perhaps EA's biggest set piece is the inclusion of a dramatic new tweak that in hindsight is long overdue. Apart from passing, what do players spend most of their time doing on the pitch? The answer: dribbling. As we reported in our last hunk of coverage for *FIFA 10*, the game is set to destroy the limited eight-way model of dribbling fans have



made do with. True 360° dribbling is finally coming, allowing players no limit to the angles they can run on the pitch.

It sounds like a massive improvement – but only if you've got the ball. We ask if it'll skew the game's balance or if defenders will get new abilities of their own to counter sprinting Ronaldos.

"We were very conscious of not making FIFA 10 'Super Dribbling Year'. We've done a lot of work on our positioning, tackling, pressing, jostling systems, etc... to ensure the game remains in balance and requires skill to utilise the new capabilities of the world's best dribblers. It's not like those who hold the ball too long get tackled and lose possession. We're striving to achieve this balance in FIFA 10 and believe that achieving it will ensure the user feels the need to pass to create space – dribbling only if they are, one: good enough and two: feel it is the right opportunity.

"On top of this, we have added a new

feature we are calling Skilled Dribble. This will allow skilled players to take quicker dribble touches at low speeds to maintain close control and protect the ball from defenders."

There's still more.

"Further to this we are looking into the balance of our sprint dribble. In FIFA 09 players like Cristiano Ronaldo and Fernando Torres were very powerful because they were good dribblers and fast runners. While we want to keep this personality in our game we're looking at reducing their speed in relation to players that are only marginally slower. One of the ways we are looking to do this is to tune the amount a player has to slow down at each touch of the ball. This amount changes based on how difficult the dribble touch is, and how good of a dribbler the player that makes the touch is. We are working at refining this system to ensure that it's not too easy to just pick up the ball and run with these players. While we are retuning



"This cross will make you jump, jump..."

SKYNET IS MY MANAGER

It's not merely the on-field AI that has been tweaked in FIFA 10, but also the brains driving all managerial positions. Now taking Chelsea into a dead rubber match against West Bromwich Albion will see more of Chelsea's second fiddle team take the pitch while the headliners take a week off to go fire golf balls out of canons and fly to South America for exotic milkshakes. Formations will also be automatically adjusted to reflect such changes so players don't have to worry about a lone benchwarmer trying to fill the void of Drogba at the top of the pitch.



"Shoo, ball, go on, get!"

this, we are still aiming to preserve the feeling you get when you break away with one of these special footballers."

In other words, Rutter and his team are going to mammoth lengths to ensure they're new little dribbling forays aren't bugged from birth. So much so that Rutter's confident they'll be a big hit with the millions, (inhales), and millions of FIFA players the world over.

"I'm certain everyone will really like the changes," he says.

Yet as any diehard FIFA fan will know, a football team is more than the ball carrier. In order to be able to produce a red-letter passing game, the rest of the team – usually under the spell of the AI behaviours – has to be up to scratch. They need to know how to move into space, how to intercept loose deliveries – all the things a single player can't do alone. Again, Rutter feels his team has that covered as he breaks into another sprint outlining a slew of features he's been supervising through over the past year.

"We've worked on our positioning system to improve the intelligence of off-the-ball movement and ensure a possession/passing strategy is effective. We've added new behaviours like curved runs so that players will make a concerted effort to stay onside when trying to break the defence. We've given the players a better understanding of space in and around the 18-yard box so that they will try to open up for cutbacks and



"Heads, I win. Tails, you lose"

position themselves to create opportunities at goal," he says as he winds down his run.

Changes like these encourage the user to maintain possession longer and be patient when looking for opportunities to exploit space behind the defence," he says. "We believe this will make chance creation more rewarding."

What makes all these new additions more impressive is that the FIFA series is renowned for more than just its on-field shenanigans. It's also known for its scintillating presentation and player models. Rutter admits that getting that right is a test of resource management. For one it's nigh impossible to ensure that Australia's Griffith brothers, for instance, look as accurate as Barcelona football freak Messi or leggy Italian striker Luca Toni.

"We try to balance it out – we do try to use what we have available to get our lesser well known players more accurate – but as soon as someone famous has a hair cut – we have to go back to do them too..."

And then there's the task of increasing the FIFA fold to include new countries and leagues. We point out that despite FIFA 10 being made in Canada, the Canadian team wasn't in FIFA 09. As it turns out Rutter can't talk about any of that at this stage, ironically pointing out that there are hardly any Canadians working on the game.

Canucks or not, he admits, they're definitely feeling the pressure to live up to the benchmark set in FIFA 09. We ask how they deal with that, and if there's ever any chairs flung about the development studio in frustration.

"Yep, we do feel a lot of pressure – but that really suits most of us," he concedes. "Even if there had never been a FIFA 09, we'd still feel the pressure – mostly from ourselves. We love sports, especially football, and we love videogames. That said, we get rid of most of our angst on the footy pitch we have at work. No flying chairs – but I had my big toe broken in a match last year."

Ouch! To conclude, we move on to an issue a touch more sacred than Rutter's toe. For years, we pined to jump online and play in 10-a-side matches. In FIFA 09 that became a possibility – at least technically. Australian players know the reality was different. With such a relatively tiny population spread over a mammoth wad of land, it was nigh impossible to use the in-game function to find a game. Nope, the only way to start one was to find a forum and recruit 20 saps to be online. It was a pain in the arse. Unfortunately, it seems

FREE KICK FREEDOM


Another new improvement to FIFA 10 will be an increase in free kick freedom. Now players can change who the kicker is at any point when winding up for a shot or pass. The defensive team hasn't been left out either. Rather than be limited to the wall position automatically assigned by AI, it will be possible for players to make their own alterations to combat kickers able to generate extra bend off their boot. There's no word whether kickers will be able to target defenders nuts, but surely...

even the great EA Canada can't solve such logistical issues.

"It's pretty hard if you live in Canada too! Sorry. We're definitely doing what we can to encourage people to play more online team play matches – although you'd have no problems finding a game in Europe," Rutter explains. "You need to help us get more Australians playing."

It's a response that carries extra gravitas in light of our next question. With the improvements to EA's formula coming thick and fast with each release, we wonder where football games will be in the next five to 10 years.

"I think we'll continue to make the best simulation of football we can. I think there's a place to continue online team play, making our manager mode even better, and keeping the 'Be A Pro' spirit going. Perhaps combining all of those elements into an all-encompassing Massive Multiplayer game wouldn't be such a bad idea..."

David Rutter, where do we sign? 



The Politically Correct Guide to Gaming

Hey there, commercial magazine readers. This is Redmond Cockburn – but please, call me Red. For the handful of you who haven't heard of me, I'm one of the most prominent government-funded arts critics in the country. Between chairing the Western Artists' National Collective and editing the Australian Review of Significant Etchings, I work upwards of five hours a week – yet I was more than willing to sacrifice even more of my valuable time to critique this strange new art-form: video games.

Until now, I have mostly only critiqued interactive museum installation pieces, such as *Gere Quest III: The Hamstering*, and *Escape From Woomera 2: Electric Boogaloo*. Yet I was surprised to find the medium also has a booming commercial sector. That's right; in acts of contrition to the dark gods of capitalism, there are those who actually 'buy' games in 'shops'.

This revelation sickened me. Property is theft, and commerce is sin. I vowed to investigate this dark new practice, to see just how much damage was being done.

What follows are the results of my research; analyses of some of the most popular video games for the 'Play-Station' family of systems. Be fore-warned: I was horrified to discover the world of commercial gaming is a place where political correctness is almost completely unheard-of...

BioShock

A deeply subversive work. In case it's not immediately obvious, know this: *BioShock* references and legitimises the twisted worldview of the dark prophetess of selfishness: Ayn Rand. Her turgid novel *Atlas Shrugged* depicts a near-future America in which the robber barons, extreme capitalists, bosses, high-rollers, entrepreneurs, and other assorted exploiters of the working classes tire of paying taxes to supported single mothers on welfare, and sod off to form their own 'perfect' libertarian society.

This scenario troubles me at a personal level. As a government-funded arts critic, it's my privilege – my right! – to get my fair share of the tax dollars paid by boring, normal people. But what if one day, certain people got out of bed and decided they wouldn't pay their taxes any more? The very thought gives me chills.

Sure, *BioShock*'s secretive commune for high achievers is depicted in a state of decay. But it's implied that all was going well until the discovery of the super-power granting substance Adam. This in turn subtly mocks the perfectly logical zero-sum-game theory of markets. After all, the only way to get anything (as far as I know) is to take it from someone else. If you have the most, it must mean you've stolen the most. The very idea that rich people might have earned their money isn't just nonsense – it's offensive!

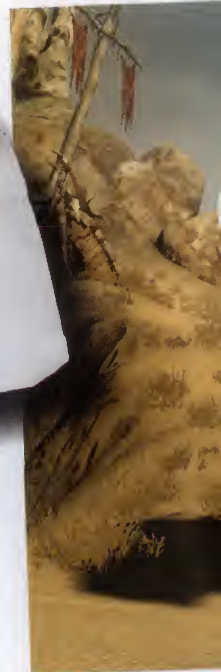
...Though on the plus-side, I liked how you could kill little girls. Conventional notions of morality should be abolished, as my good friend Bill Henson will tell you.

The Final Insult:

Make no mistake, these are dark days we're living; and the election of Barack Hussein Obama proves nothing. The skyrocketing book sales of *Atlas Shrugged* prove that Americans are more reactionary than ever. I fear for the future.

Recommendation:

Re-record dialogue to show how capitalism destroyed the perfect socialist enclave of Rapture. Big Daddies to become Big Bankers, Splicers to become Small Business Owners.





Golden Axe: Beast Rider

The premise of a warrior maiden fighting for her pagan sisterhood was promising; a look into the life of nascent feminists like Boadicea and Catherine the Great. Yet the reality made my heart leap into my throat. This game encourages you to harness and exploit animals!

As if to highlight the trauma of these poor creatures, the mythical beasts that young Tyriss Flare can ride tend to die after a handful of hits. But since it takes forever to get anywhere on foot, the game twists your arm into enslaving the poor things.

The earthy, brown palette throughout gave the impression of tribal authenticity, but was betrayed by the customisation options – all of which centered on what kind of bikini or hot pants Tyriss should wear.

The Final Insult:

The idea that women should be judged on their appearance is almost as offensive as the notion that they achieve less in life because they are somehow less capable. Common sense tells us that a vast patriarchal conspiracy lies behind any and all perceived female 'failings'.

Germaine Greer would be outraged if she saw this – I certainly am.

Recommendation:

Replace battle bikinis with burlap sacks.

Fallout 3

Oh, this game makes my blood boil. At first glance, it seems to vindicate everything a progressive, enlightened soul knows to be true: That America is a cultural wasteland, that democracy is a farce, and that the arrogance of the United States will lead inevitably to its destruction. But this is all a sham – its goal is the seduction of the innocent.

Where to begin? Let's start with its heteronormative conceit, implying that carnal relationships between men and women are somehow 'normal', and 'healthy'. The Lady Killer perk lets you seduce women, and the Black Widow perk lets you exploit men – but there are no corresponding gameplay bonuses that reward homosexuality! This is too gross an omission to be a mere oversight. It is clearly an attempt at wide-scale cultural brainwashing.

Then there's the snide criticism of socialism. In the fractured world of the Capital Wasteland, communities that embrace democracy and capitalism are depicted as relatively prosperous and enlightened, while command economies are slammed as backwards. The subterranean collective called Little Lamplight is literally a world of children – socialism is something one grows out of, apparently. Likewise, the Republic of Dave is a counter-revolutionary caricature that I personally found more nauseating than *Animal Farm*.

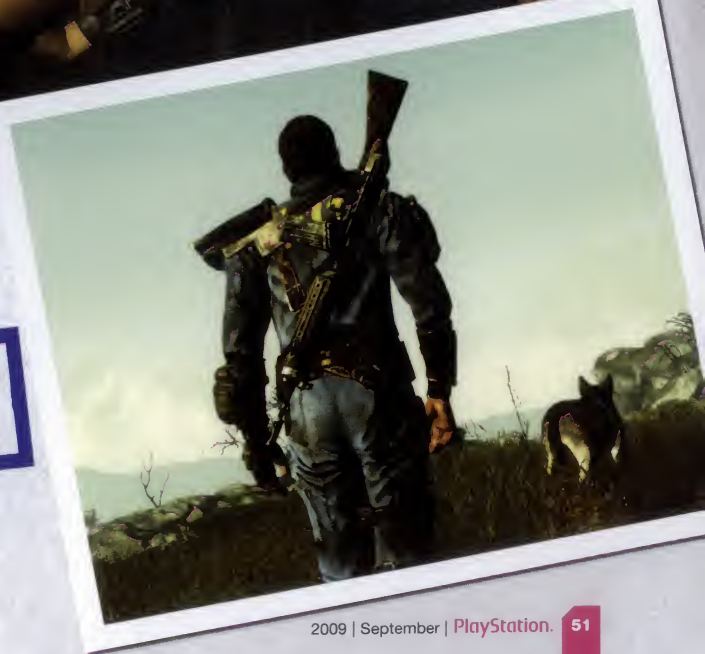
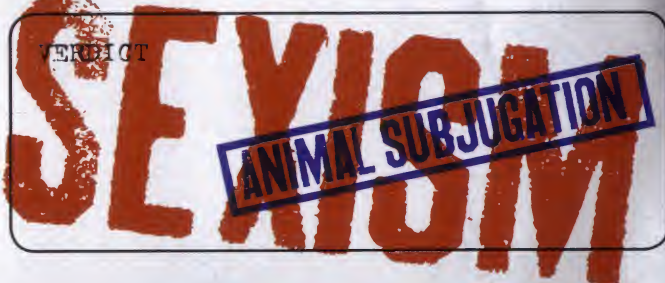
Don't get me started on the ghouls – an entire race you're encouraged to exterminate. Maybe Bethesda has some gas chambers planned for an upcoming expansion; I'm sure they'll put Carmack right on it.

The Final Insult:

There's a morality system that tracks your every deed. These bozos actually think there's a difference between right and wrong. That's so wrong!

Recommendation:

Replacement of all story content to reflect a more progressive, post-modern world view.



The Politically Correct Guide to Gaming



Far Cry 2

I had high hopes for this one – all the press surrounding it raved how it was an exercise in Nietzschean philosophy come to life. When I read how the two insurgent factions you could play off against each other operated in a moral vacuum, and how to win you must become the ultimate post-moral Superman yourself, I got a strange tingling in my underpants – a sensation that I hadn't felt since watching the Men's gymnastics at the Olympics.

But the reality was a rude shock – like being slapped in the face with a wet sausage. *Far Cry 2* depicts Africa as a backwards, primitive place. A place where nothing is ever achieved, no progress is ever made, and where all the inhabitants are ruthless, simple-minded killers. The concept of the Noble Savage is the pillar of my world-view, yet it was brought down by the Samsons of Ubisoft Montreal. For shame.

Dig deeper, and you'll find more filth. The two warring factions in the game are clearly meant to satirise the valiant Communist insurgents in the Rhodesian civil war. As you'll recall, these courageous fighters were able to grind down the resolve of the white minority rulers, leading to the rise of president-for-life Robert Mugabe. I think you'll agree that if Mugabe wasn't in charge, then Zimbabwe might be a very different country today!

The Final Insult:

Most offensive of all, the subtext of the game implies that a person's identity is defined by his actions. That one can somehow choose one's own destiny, when it's so obvious that society's to blame for everything.

Recommendation:

Change setting to American South; change skins and voice banks to depict warring hillbillies.



Team Fortress 2

I want to love Valve – I really do. Their profit-sharing scheme warms the cockles of my heart, and their 'When It's Done/ If We Feel Like It' attitude to deadlines really speaks to a career academic such as myself. Yet I cannot ignore their sins, and *Team Fortress 2* takes more than its fair suck of the sauce bottle.

Take the gender balance. Nine roles, nine men. The subtext is clear: if you want a job done, and done right, give it to a man.

Granted, the voice-over lady is a woman. But she does not influence events; she only observes. Conspiracy theories are circulating that the Pyro, clad head to toe in protective gear, may actually be a woman in disguise. The presence of a handbag in his (her?) locker is cited as evidence. My gut feeling is that this is just another sexist dig from the narrow-minded Valve staff. The implication: that a man would have to be crazy to own a lady's handbag. Ergo, the Pyro is a crazy, crazy man. Concordantly, we should laugh at this, like the sexist pigs we are.

But it's not just women who get the short end of the sauce bottle in *TF2* – non-Anglo-Saxon cultures are also fair game. The French character is a backstabbing sleaze, the German is an unethical butcher, and the Scotchman is utterly uncomfortable in his own skin, driven to alcoholism by his demographic improbability: "I'm a black Scottish cyclops! Wah!"

Only the Southern engineer and the Aussie sniper are depicted as being even remotely competent; a tacit endorsement of conservative values.

The Final Insult:

Did I mention the cast is almost entirely white? Pass the sick bucket, please – my brunch is trying to escape.

Recommendation:

Alter character skins and voice banks to reflect greater diversity. All American/British/Jewish characters must be twisted, evil.

VERDICT

RACIST

COUNTER-REVOLUTIONARY

VERDICT

ANGLO-CENTRIC

SEXIST



Monster Hunter Freedom Unite

A horrifying monument to man's hubris. The game recreates sweeping vistas of an unspoiled Earth; tracts of virgin forest and moist wetlands teeming with life.

Yet the player's mission is the ultimate sin: interacting with the environment for his own benefit! As we know, value judgements are wrong – and assuming a human's needs are more important than those of an animal, plant, or inanimate rock is treason against Gaia.

Oh, but it gets worse. Running amongst the harmless megafauna of this electronic eden, you can choose to fell these proud beasts, carving off raw meat from their still twitching corpses. And when some of these goatly creatures justifiably fight back, you can harvest their remains to improve your armour and weapons.

This upgrade path is a vicious cycle; a glorified big game safari for endangered fauna. I was appalled. I was shocked. A game like this could warp a child for life.

The Final Insult:

The fact that the game encourages co-operative play adds the olive of peer pressure to an already dirty, toxic cocktail. Diabolical.

Recommendation:

Ban outright. Those found in possession should be subjected to re-education.



Riff: Everyday Shooter

I ignore the music. Disregard the miasma of gorgeous colours.

Even in the abstract, beautiful world of *Everyday Shooter*, the only way to solve any problem is through violence. By taking action!

Why aren't there any games that see things from another perspective? Why are there no games that promote INaction? Hmmmm?

Gough Whitlam, the greatest statesman of the 20th century, once said that only the impotent are pure – I think he was on to something!

The Final Insult:

In fighting the abstract in-game enemies, one is reminded of complex biological processes and the struggles of the World Wars. What could be more offensive than Life and Liberty?

Recommendation:

Jonathan Mak should be burnt at the stake.

VERDICT

OFFENSIVE

PROMOTES VIOLENCE

JUDGEMENTAL

Closing Thoughts

These games are sick, and only a sick person would play them. Don't talk to me about freedom of speech – deviant works such as these deserve no such protection.

Like me, you must by now be frothing at the bit. Fret not – the wheels of coercion are in motion.

In addition to the government's plans to filter all 'illegal and inappropriate' internet content, soon they will restrict all importation and download access to games rated higher than MA15+. And this is just the beginning! Soon all games sold in Australia will have to conform to strict codes of Political Correctness. This should be a piece of cake for the developers, since they can already tweak the amount of blood and swearing. How hard can it be?

Yes, it's a dirty world we live in, but I'm optimistic. After all, if the right rules can create a perfect society, the same should apply to games. When we finally get to taste the greener grass of a fairer tomorrow, remember that it was me, Red Cockburn, who led the way.

VERDICT

ENVIRONMENTAL VANDALISM

SPECIESISM

XENOCIDE

TWO HEADS > ONE

Celebration of the cooperation sensation

The cooperative mode is gaming's ultimate dickhead filter. Think about it; to even get your foot in the door you need a bonafide friend who willingly chooses to spend their precious gaming time being the Murtaugh to your Riggs, the Cash to your Tango, the Sundance to your Butch, the Hooch to your Turner, the Goose to your Maverick. Okay, maybe not that last one (Goose died early – like a punk – and refused to respawn). Yes sir, co-op truly is a beautiful thing and, for your personal edification, we have compiled a list of the bestest buddy-buddy experiences to be shared on a Sony.



RESISTANCE

PS3 / Insomniac / 2007

Straight out of the gate, *Resistance* has superior co-op to the sequel, and anyone who disagrees with this fact needs a shoelaces-to-chin uppercut. Why? Campaign/story co-op always beats out a loose collection of missions without a plot. Combat-wise, there are few joys in this life that compare with having a shotgun-totting buddy lure Chimera out of their cover, while you hang back, tagging away with your Bullseye, chunking heat-seeking bullets at them. Bottom line: *Resistance* is never futile if you have a mate willing to play as 'team human shield'.

2

WHAT THE SYMBOLS MEAN



Splitscreen



Online



MARVEL ULTIMATE ALLIANCE

PS3 / Raven Software / 2006

When you finally finish the pre-game cage match that decides who will play as Wolverine, a session of *Marvel Ultimate Alliance* can be one hell of an epic four-player cooperative experience. Because hey, with a name that includes the phrase 'Ultimate Alliance', how could it not be co-op gold? The game allows for full drop-in, drop-out co-op of every mission, so friends can just jump on, fight evil for a minute, and then hop off to go make some toast for everyone else (or to go pickup the pizza/beer). Boo-yah.

4 4



RAINBOW SIX VEGAS 2

PS3 / Ubisoft Montreal / 2008

Terrorists your game is through, because now you have to answer to: Rainbow Sex (as the game is sometimes known as in New Zealand). That's right folks, so long as you aren't speaking fluent Kiwi, propositioning a buddy to watch bring up the rear in a session of *Rainbow...* uh... 'Six' is the most action-packed, hetero-sounding experience two dudes can share. Close quarters combat has never been done this well in a game before, and if you don't watch those angles and cover one another, you're an obituary waiting to happen.

2 4 2



GRAW 2

PS3 / Red Storm Entertainment / 2007

If you want co-op fun, you should walk into a games shop, wait until they ask you what you want, and then growl the following guttural mumble; "GRAW!". Featuring a dedicated co-op elimination mode, this is some intense, 'one-hit-one-kill' shit here, folks. This is the best way to play co-op: basically you need one of your crew (hereafter referred to as 'bait boy') to Rambo in and piss on the AI hornet's nest. Everybody else sits back on the grassy knoll (or the gravelly road, whatever is more elevated) with .50 cal sniper rifles. Send 'em home.

4 12



ROCK BAND

PS3, PS2 / Harmonix / 2008

Why is this better than *GH* for co-op? It's all in the name really; *Guitar Hero* – singular (as in four egotistical bastards playing a guitar for individual recognition), as opposed to *Rock Band* (a group of awesome people being awesome together). Honestly, playing through *Band World Tour* with some buddies is stupid amounts of fun, especially if you give the band a bitching name, like "Rolling Def Zepplegarden". Also, unlike *GH*, *Rock Band* features the ability to sacrifice your star power to 'save' any band member who has cocked up. Everybody wins.

4 4

System link

Words: Wyatt Hunts



LITTLEBIGPLANET

PS3 / Media Molecule / 2008

Sack boy. Sack girl. Superstar DJs. Here we go! *LittleBigPlanet* is the ultimate four player cooperative platforming experience. Is it awesome because you have to work together to solve puzzles? No. Is it because you can download a never-ending supply of new levels to play on? Nope. *LittleBigPlanet* has awesome co-op because you can backhand each other, grab teammates and drag them to a bottomless chasm death, and quickly create levels based on people you hate. We once spent five hours playing a themed level entitled "Why Scott is a douchenozzle jockey".

4 4



RESIDENT EVIL 5

PS3 / Capcom / 2009

Specifically designed as a co-op adventure, *Resident Evil 5* is light on frights, heavy on gun fights, and earns bonus points for its unyielding dedication to delivering gory head explosions. Unfairly victimised as a 'racist game', you may still want to monitor your conduct when playing with a multicultural friend. Official advice: look to the cookie, and make an effort to kill an even number of black and white zombies. Unofficial advice: political correctness is for pussies – equip the infinite rocket launcher and let God sort his Coco Pops from his Rice Bubbles.

2 2



FIFA 09

PS3 / EA Canada / 2008

Seven players. One TV. This is the pinnacle of sports co-op and a kick in the guts for any 360 owners out there (only four players? Pathetic). The beautiful game becomes the drop-dead gorgeous game when seven people are working together in tandem, but there are some hurdles to get past: securing seven controllers, and having six people in your house. The first problem is an easy fix (BYO controller) – however you can't avoid six hooligans stinking up your domicile, unalphabetising your DVDs, and sticky-taping your cat to the ceiling fan when you're off taking a piss.

7



CALL OF DUTY: WORLD AT WAR

PS3 / Treyarch / 2009

Call of Duty: World at War is all about the cooperation sensation. Not only can you play through the single player campaign with a comrade – sans the sniper mission (shenanigans!) – but you can also unlock a unique survival mode that pits you against goosestepping, gourd-munching, Germans (Nazis, to be precise). This mode is the perfect formula of strategy and teamwork versus greed and bloodlust. It also has endless replayability due to it having no real ending: sooner or later everybody winds up as zombie wiener schnitzel. Zombie Nazis, we hate these guys.

2 4 4

HONORABLE MENTIONS

The Lord of The Rings: The Return of the King (PS2)
Shaun Murray's Wakeboarding Unleashed (PS2)



ARMY OF TWO

PS3 / EA Montreal / 2008

Featuring more overt fist-pounding than an Obama election rally, *Army of Two* is a game purely designed with co-op in mind. Essentially, you and a mate play as Rios and Salem; two bad-arse mercenaries who do everything together – taking cover, getting over walls, and they even have a duet karaoke routine for picking up chicks in bars (presumably). The cooperative killin' here is righteous, and things only enter 'uncomfortable bromance' territory during the piggyback parachuting section – when one dude gets strapped to the other dude's... er, dude.

2 2



PIXELJUNK MONSTERS

PSN / Q Games / 2008

"Pick up the money!" "No, you get the f--king money, I'm dancing on the anti-air." "You only need 50 gold to get another fire guy – you get the f--king money!" "Did you unlock fire instead of lasers?" "Of course I did, we need fire for the spiders!" "NO! We need lasers for the floaty balloon guys!" "You told me to unlock the fire!" "NO! I said unlock the laser!" "Argh! We'll have to start again now!" "Just keep going, we can make it. Build another cannon – HURRY UP!" "FINE!" "Nooooo! Not there jackass – up on the left!" "Ah! All our babies are dead!"

2



THE WARRIORS

PS2, PSP / Rockstar / 2007

Can you dig it?: there's 20,000 cops, and 100,000 rival gang members baying for your blood – decent odds for any respectable co-op partnership. Playing like a three-dimensional, cocaine-snorting version of *Final Fight*, *The Warriors* is an absolute tonne of fun. The coolest feature has got to be the spitscreen that only kicks in when two players move off on their own direction. If you do consider yourself something of a warrior we recommend you grab this off eBay, and then, "Come out to plaayaaay" *clink*, *clink*, *clink*...

2



LEGO STAR WARS

PS3, PS2, PSP / Traveller's Tales / 2006

To those of you who turn their nose up and view this game as just a kids title we say: build a bridge, and get over yourself... a LEGO bridge, preferably. Bursting with a quirky sense of humor and based around the coolest sci-fi universe ever (*Star Trek* included), *LEGO Star Wars* is fun for all ages and is a completionists wet dream. Never before have two straight gents been able to say that they spent the whole night picking up as many studs as they could get their hands on. *LEGO Indiana Jones* ain't a slouch either, but this works a fraction better.

2

Mortal Kombat Shaolin Monks (PS2) **Timesplitters 2** (PS2) **Half-Life: Decay** (PS2) **Killzone Liberation** (PSP)
Baldur's Gate Dark Alliance 1 & 2 (PS2) **SOCOM series** (PS2, PS3, PSP) **Guitar Hero II & III** (PS2, PS3)



JAMES BOND: EVERYTHING OR NOTHING

PS2 / EA Redwood / 2004

Who is up for some Bondage? Answer: everyone. This third-person shooter was the first Bond game to feature a two-player co-op mode (that was 13 missions of nut-crushing difficulty). Playing as two of four available MI6 agents, you have to murderise henchmen (with no regard for their hench-families waiting at home), complete an array of mission objectives, and finish within a strict target time. Oh yeah, keeping with Bond canon, you only live twice – then you'll have to reattempt said level, rookie.

2



SPLINTER CELL: CHAOS THEORY

PS2 / Ubisoft Montreal / 2005

Give a man a Sam Fisher: you feed his gaming appetite for today. Train two men how to be Sam Fisher (in a unique seven mission co-op campaign): you teach them awesomeness. Using lethal gadgets and parenthood-jeopardising jumpsuits, you and a buddy must stealth about popping caps, avoiding traps, and clambering up each other's bodies to reach extra high ledges. Don't ask what the climber uses as a handhold (or "shudder" a foot hold) and you'll be fine. It's ridiculous *Splinter Cell: Conviction* isn't coming to PS3. What did we do wrong?

2 2

HOMEF SWEET HOME



Kaos Studios general manager and design director David Votypka talks to us about North Koreans, the near future and why there's no place like home



The first game from Kaos Studios never actually made it to PS3. How's the PS3 version of its second game coming along?

"Much better," says Kaos Studios GM David Votypka with a smile.

"We got a bit of a late start on PS3 in the *Frontlines* days, and it was also being outsourced. Both of these factors were not ideal and ultimately we had to scale back to 360 and PC. This time around we are doing the PS3 fully in-house, have planned for it from the beginning, and therefore it's coming along at the same level the other platforms are progressing at."

Homefront was one of E3 2009's biggest surprises. We didn't enter the demo expecting rubbish. Both of these factors were not ideal and ultimately we had to scale back to 360 and PC. This time around we are doing the PS3 fully in-house, have planned for it from the beginning, and therefore it's coming along at the same level the other platforms are progressing at."

"We consider the E3 demo to be a proof of experience of the single player game," says Votypka. "It is a representation of our gameplay goals, as well as our story-telling goals. As you saw, the demo began with a low intensity, in-game story-telling sequence that showed and described the world of *Homefront*. The game features a United States Resistance populace that exists in a shocking new reality formed by the two main themes in the game: a lifestyle altering energy crisis, and life under foreign occupation."

"As the demo unfolds you are introduced to the world both by direct character narrative, as well as environmental narrative from the world around you. This is then followed up by an extremely intense combat scenario. The varied pacing demonstrated here is a direct example of the design for the campaign, which features

low intensity narrative scenes intermixed with high intensity combat. Of course since we are making a shooter the larger focus will be on combat, but lulls in the action and delivering details of the world around you, what we call the 'why we fight' moments, is important to provide the right mix of variety to the game's pace."

Something that certainly shouldn't go unmentioned is the subtle yet very deliberate detail in the level that was showcased at E3. Everyday items juxtapose the military kit lying about, and *Homefront* is very much about bringing war to your own backyard. Is having these everyday items, which are otherwise alien in 'normal' shooters, crucial in capturing the atmosphere Kaos is aiming for?

"Absolutely," confirms Votypka. "It's a key area of focus for us, and we are pleased that these elements successfully grabbed attention in the demo because they were crafted with a great deal of purpose and intent."

"A shooter obviously needs great combat in order to succeed and compete. However we feel that our game world can bring a great deal more to the experience. *Homefront* will feature a level of association with the world around you and the events within it that most shooters do not."

It's true many shooters transplant the action to exotic and unique locations for one reason or another, but the danger there is that the action itself can become quite meaningless to the player. *Homefront* avoids this by using the kind of locations many of us already have an emotional investment in. *Homefront* will confront you with a world that you recognise that has been horribly subverted.

"One of the core vision statements we use to guide development of the game is: the familiar has become alien," says Votypka. "This relates to taking the world we (Westerners) live in, that we know so intimately and see every day, and merging in alterations caused by the energy crisis and occupation themes. For example, the suburbs that many Westerners have grown up in are now mostly abandoned because from an energy efficiency and effectiveness standpoint, they are a colossal

misallocation of resources.

"Residents spend significant energy to commute to the main hubs, the cities, and great amounts of energy is also used to supply goods and materials out to those sprawling suburb layouts. In the future energy crisis depicted in the game (based on the theory of Peak Oil), the suburbs would be one of the first things to fail. Many people have moved to the cities, some squatters remain, and the resistance have adapted parts of them to be effective refuges or hideaways from Occupation forces."

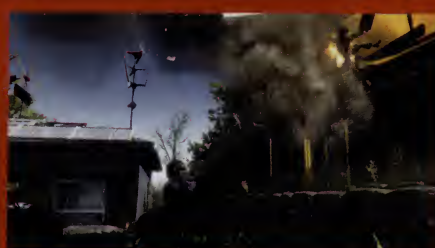
"The familiar world has also become alien in *Homefront* due to life under the Occupation. The cul-de-sac you grew up in, the department store or supermarket you use to shop at, has either fallen into disrepair, been converted into a military resource, or has become a war zone. You will fight in and around all of these in the game, and when something that is so familiar and part of your daily existence falls victim to these 'alien' transformations, it certainly adds a deeper level of association and immersion; and that's our goal." The key to getting this done successfully is doing it organically, and that's something *Homefront* seems to be doing well. ➔

HOME AND HOSED

Multiplayer is generally a given within the genre these days, even though it can be tough to stand out.

"Our long multiplayer development history really serves us well here," says Votypka. "From *Frontlines*, to *Battlefield 2*, to *Desert Combat*, there have been a lot of lessons learned throughout the years."

"Like all our work in the past, *Homefront* will have a very large focus on the multiplayer side of things. We are continuing with the large-scale warfare element, that ranges from infantry, to drones, tanks, helicopters and jets. With *Frontlines* we spent a lot of time building these types of features into the Unreal 3 engine. With *Homefront* we are strictly focused on iteration, polish and evolving the multiplayer design into simply the best large-scale warfare experience to date. We'll be revealing much more about the multiplayer side a little bit closer to ship."



The most intense part of the whole demo, for instance, occurred when a woman and her screaming baby ran through the crossfire to take refuge in the very same house you were firing out of. Conventional lead-flinging to a soundtrack of infant wailing pushes *Homefront* deep into uncharted territory. It's remarkable how the dynamic of a battle changes when you put something as vulnerable as a baby at stake. It was primal and challenging, and Votypka is quick to agree.

"The simple concept of having civilians, women, a mother and baby that are caught up in the occupation, the combat, and the desperate and degraded state of the world brings a human element to a military game that is often not seen or experienced in this genre.

"Primal' is a great word to describe how we approach the world and the player's interaction with it. That was a lesson John Milius shared with us, which was when you're writing or designing a story such as we are, you need to go back to people's primal roots, and begin from there. Protection of the innocent, the young, of our loved ones, runs much deeper than an abstracted FPS military soldier we don't know much about."

The collaboration with John Milius is no small detail, and it means that those of you who've been wondering why *Homefront* sounds an awful lot like *Red Dawn* can rest easy. Milius was the writer of *Red Dawn* (and also *Apocalypse Now*, among others) and has lent his considerable talents to *Homefront*'s development.

"John is just an amazing idea guy," says Votypka. "He's basically a military historian as his knowledge on the subject ranges from the Genghis Khan days to vast details about conflicts in Vietnam, WWII, and current day. When John comes in for a creative meeting, much of the time is actually spent hearing stories he tells, that ultimately provide some great reference and ideas for us. One of his classic sayings at the end of a story is, 'You just can't write this stuff!' Which means that some of the things that have actually happened in the history of humanity and war are almost beyond imagination, so take inspiration from it whenever you can.

"He also has helped us define things like what a resistance force really means, how they might operate, and the key fact that a group

such as ours would rarely, if ever, win a battle against a national army outright. Their tactics should be much more guerrilla oriented, and they should always have a well thought out, highly coordinated plan that they execute on. They get in, accomplish their objective, and get out before they are overwhelmed. It sounds simple, but when making a shooter it's easy to set the player and his allies up as the side that always kick ass, even against overpowering odds."

Kaos Studios also receive input from Richard Machowicz from *Future Weapons*. Like *Frontlines: Fuel of War*, *Homefront* is set in the near future – so the strategy for Kaos is to focus on the kind of weaponry that the military is actually planning to use on the battlefields 20 years from now.

"This includes the weapons and vehicles people know and love that exist today, but also focuses on advancements in hand weapon technology, vehicle technology, and new weapons such as drones and unmanned combat vehicles," says Votypka.

"Mack from *Future Weapons* is a great resource to bounce ideas off of and to pick his brain on the latest military advancements, how it works, and where it might go next."

It's interesting that both *Frontlines* and now *Homefront* are set in the 'near future' – is this just a coincidence or is this setting something Kaos prefers, and feels at home in?

"The near future isn't something we plan to limit ourselves to, but so far it has been the best fit for the games we have wanted to make," says Votypka. "The timeframe allows us a great balance between elements such as authenticity and familiarity, but provides enough creative freedom to do something new, and to not be overly restricted by current events.

"In general, our approach has been to create concepts and settings that are

DRIVING IT HOME

One of *Homefront*'s other points of difference is the Drama Engine.

"It really is an assortment of a number of smaller features that we collectively refer to as the Drama Engine," says Votypka. "In essence, it is a procedural approach to making sure high payoff (or high drama) events happen as close to or directly in front of the player as possible.

"Although we aren't yet talking about the specifics of each sub-system, one of the key examples we showed in the E3 demo falls into the sub-feature we refer to as 'Player Magnetism'. In this case, a speeding enemy vehicle was coming into the combat space toward the player. If you successfully shoot it with the RPG you have in hand, it explodes it flips over, and the flaming wreck comes careening towards you. The key to what we're doing is that if the player is standing [nine metres] to the left or right, the wreck would still track toward the player. In this case you have to actively move out of the way before the wreck reaches you. The keynote here is the player ultimately feels much more involved in the coolest events that occur in the combat space, because they are procedurally focused to affect you in one way or another.

"Obviously there are constraints we implement that keep it believable and not overdone, but the goal of the overall system is that the high drama moments are generated with the maximum level of player involvement."



“North Korea is the most militarised country on the planet and has the fourth largest standing army in the world”




generated by asking questions such as: 'what if?' or 'what would it be like to?' For example, what if Peak Oil theories came true? And what would it be like to fight as a resistance member amidst an occupation of America? This ultimately leads to a piece of speculative fiction that drives the game world and the experience we want to immerse players into."

Just how speculative is this fiction though? That's relative. North Korea is the most militarised country on the planet and has the fourth largest standing army in the world. With nearly 1.2 million armed personnel, about 20 per cent of North Korean men aged 17 to 54 are in the regular armed forces. While the US military is better equipped and more technologically advanced, North Korea actually outnumbers the US when it comes to sheer manpower when its even larger number of reserve troops are included in the count.

And how long before North Korea started messing about with nukes in public did *Homefront* begin gestating?

"*Homefront* has been in development for about one year," says Votycka. "We considered various enemies and ultimately decided on North Korea – there is a lot more to consider in this choice than one might think."

"Kaos has always been interested in topical settings, and it wasn't that long after the Korea choice was made that they started their latest round of nuclear testing and threats to South Korea and the West. I recently commented to our PR colleagues that the North Koreans seem so in line with the plot developments in our back story that I'm starting to feel like we're in an episode of *The Twilight Zone*."

Let's just hope this won't be a case of life imitating art. *Homefront* is slated to arrive early next year. 



27 August '09



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66 You might just be able to love the strengths of this game, rather than lament its weaknesses **99**

ASHES CRICKET 2009

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REVIEW RATING

PlayStation
GOLD AWARD

10 Incredible: Perfection is relative and elusive, and no game will ever be perfect. Our 10 doesn't mean a game is flawless, it means a game has done everything it set out to do in an amazing fashion and thus it deserves our highest possible praise.

PlayStation
SILVER AWARD

9 Excellent: An outstanding game, either limited by its scope, sequel status (and lack of improvement) or a few minor blemishes from being a 10. Likely one of the very best in its genre, a 9 comes with high praise.

PlayStation
BRONZE AWARD

8 Great: Still well ahead of the pack in most departments, despite a few issues here and there. Thoroughly recommended.

7 Good: A robust package that does a solid job despite a bunch of moderate problems. Enjoyable in parts, just not fantastic overall.

6 Decent: This game will have some noticeable flaws that may make it hard to recommend to those who aren't fans of the genre, but it will do more right than it does wrong. Just.

5 Mediocre: A conceded pass, if you know what we mean. Half okay, but half-busted. Might scrape by for fans, but few will want to play a game that half sucks.

4 Poor: Anything below 5, strictly speaking, is a fail – but there are degrees of 'bad' just as there are degrees of 'good'. A 4 is unrefined, partially broken and poorly designed.

3 Very disappointing: Things start to go very wrong here – fundamentally flawed in many ways, boring and close to pointless.

2 Terrible: Virtually nothing good here at all, and definitely not worth the effort of removing the wrapper.

1 The worst: Reserved for the very worst gaming could ever offer. A broken, offensive mess without a single redeeming quality.

We choose to review our games on a super-slick Full HD 1080p 40" Bravia X-series for the best picture possible. This sucker melts eyeballs!





WORSE THAN BETTER THAN
SHANE WARNE | NATHAN HAURITZ

ASHES CRICKET 2009

Marvellous effort, that?

Australian sport: ain't it awesome! Whether it's AFL stars punching each other's lights out, V8 Supercar drivers calling their fans a 'pack of arseholes', league players unloading their dacks in hotel corridors or Shane Warne simply being Shane Warne, we have a long and proud history of playing everything tough, and making a genuine spectacle out of ourselves in the process. Better still, we love nothing more than sticking it right up those Pommy bastards at every given opportunity and if we can draw the pain out over a five day Test then you bloody ripper – gives us more drinking time after all.

The thing is, while the Yanks get their sport games delivered with graphics

that make even Michael Clarke's sheila look like kangaroo curry, and have more features, modes and gameplay polish than you can poke a pair o' tongs at, our legendary real sports tend to cop the raw prawn when it comes to development budget. It's not because the publishers hate us, it is just that there are so few of us relative to the seppos and such that even if the game sells well, it will not sell epic. *FIFA* has a worldwide audience and gets all kind of money thrown at it; cricket doesn't and won't.

So with *Ashes Cricket 2009* arriving just in time to capitalise on the latest Ashes series, the real question is; can it punch above its weight? All Aussie ockerisms aside, it is with much frustration that we declare *Ashes Cricket 2009* to edge more to the slips than it drives through the covers.

SHOULD'VE WORN A HELMET, UGLY

The production values are just so sub-par. Visually the game is awkward at best with canned animations that are so limited it actually holds the gameplay back simply from the required action not being in the player's arsenal. Watching balls go past fielders because they cannot dive or take an age to bend down and pick up a dropped catch is bash-your-head-against-the-wall stuff. The recycled commentary quickly gets horribly repetitive despite being

buoyed by famous cricketing voices, the 'legend's coaching' lacks enthusiasm and the effects have no grunt. Player likeness and stadium textures are almost laughable too, and while we wouldn't say it is quite PS2-era stuff, you'd be hard-pressed calling it truly next-gen.

It is also option-lite. You can play the Ashes, Tests, one-dayers or Twenty20, but only the Australian and English squads are properly licensed with every other nation getting crappy knock-offs. You can customise the teams and create your own players but you'll be astounded by the laziness here. You can choose between three colour tones, a barrel of head shapes and zinc placement: that's it. *Tiger Woods* eat your heart out. All the clothing and kit options need to be unlocked and as for recreating the actual teams from other nations, forget it. We tried to change Kiwi Braden McCalam to Brendan McCullum only to discover that first names are restricted to six characters. That's fine for Asif Heedgivashid, but what about Adsaeed Heedgivashid? So much for adding Halfadozen Marsbars, or Mohammad Hasabiggen!

HOWZAT GAMEPLAY?

Once you stop scratching your head over these details and get on the paddock things do improve. If you caught *Ricky Ponting International Cricket* a few years back then you'll be happy to know that there has been some definite improvements to the gameplay, in particular with the bowling. A good result not only requires direction and power, but both to match to bowl the perfect delivery. It takes a bit of getting used to, but ultimately requires more skill and is more rewarding. Catches have also been vastly improved, with the camera switching to third-person view on the player and you required to judge your catch as the ball comes in, although you still need to think quick.

Batting still sees the left thumbstick used for deciding shot direction as the right shuffles you across the crease. **LB** activates a back-foot shot and **FB** front-foot and the engine gets it right more often than not. Timing is essential and it does take a while to master, but once you get your eye in and begin to pick up the deliveries you can start playing some rewarding shots. Make no mistake, there is tactical



INFO

GENRE: SPORTS
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: ATARI
DEVELOPER: TRANSMISSION GAMES
PLAYERS: 1-4
PRICE: \$99.95

GET CONFIDENT STUPID

One of the game's best ideas is its Confidence Meter, which sits below the bowler and batter between deliveries. As a bowler with each delivery you're judged on speed and accuracy, whereas for batters it's all about timing. After each delivery the player's confidence shifts depending on how they performed. The meters work in relation to each other too: bowl a great ball and play a great block and nothing changes. A great ball that's edged between the slips will see the bowler's confidence grow, while the batsman's will shrivel. It's a nifty idea that nudges the concept of building an innings and developing form, which we really like.



Smashing gameplay for six



“Watching balls go past fielders because they cannot dive or take an age to bend down and pick up a dropped catch is bash-your-head-against-the-wall stuff”

depth to this game: you can play to a plan as a bowler, and bat to smash 'em or grind depending on how you manage your player's confidence (see 'Get Confident Stupid').

MULTIPLAYER FTW!

Unfortunately, the AI is a total dog to play against. It bowls decent, but it bats out of town and you'll have to be a bit of a glutton for punishment to go through an Ashes test on normal, let alone a series, against the computer. The reality is, for *Ashes Cricket 2009* to hit form it needs to deliver a fun multiplayer experience. You and a mate need to be able to sink a case of lukewarm tinnies while re-enacting the whole Ashes series without getting bored, frustrated or feeling a desperate need to switch to *FIFA*. Thankfully, it seems the gameplay is just strong enough to achieve this, despite itself.

It sucks that the sims of our beloved sports do not get the budgets to be polished within an inch of their life like those of the Americans. As a single player experience *Ashes Cricket 2009* really isn't worth it. If you have a readily available mate for on or offline play and a passion for the sport you might just be able to love the strengths of this game, rather than lament its weaknesses. Still, nowhere near enough has changed in two years. **Chris Stead**



FINAL SAY:



- A definite step-up in the gameplay
- A fun multiplayer experience



- Shocking production values almost across the board
- Limited in every facet, from customisation, to licenses and modes

VERDICT: It's easy to be let down by your first moments in *Ashes Cricket 2009*, but persevere through the ugly and you'll find some multiplayer beauty.

6



INFO

GENRE: ADVENTURE
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: EA
DEVELOPER: EA BRIGHT
LIGHT STUDIO
PLAYERS: 1-2
PRICE: \$39.95

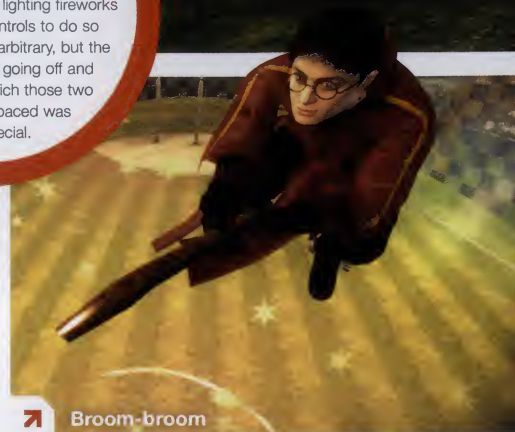
Make sure you wear gloves when playing with sparklers, kids

IT'S A KIND OF MAGIC

Our time at Hogwarts wasn't a total trudge-fest. One section saw us being tasked with lighting fireworks for a party. The controls to do so were extraordinarily arbitrary, but the effect of fireworks going off and the manner in which those two minutes were paced was quite special.

HARRY POTTER AND THE HALF-BLOOD PRINCE

A royal flush this ain't



Broom-broom

pass through floating stars, chasing the snitch. And that's it.

After grimacing through quidditch, the bulk of *Half-Blood Prince* is made up of potion mixing and duels. The former involves following on screen prompts to fill up and alter the contents of a cauldron by carefully tipping in various liquids or rat spleens. Mess it up and you'll have to do it again, and again. Duelling is a stick-mashing affair, often won by getting as close as you can to your opponent and pounding them with attacks until they limply fall over. One common aspect of each minigame is that each time you start one it feels like you're forcing yourself to drink your own urine whilst frying in the desert: you don't want to do it, but must to make it to the end.

Sadly, the experience you get when you do break away from the story, running between point A and B, collecting crests on the way to the next potion mix/duel/quidditch game, is tramping round the castle, purely to collect crests and find the supplementary classes that are all about mixing potions/duelling/playing quidditch and expanding your wizardry repertoire to mix potions, and... well, you get the idea. Simply put, if you're over the age of 12, Potter fan or not, there's very little reason to put this in your console. **Paul Taylor**



"I'm a little teapot, short and stout..."

The fact is that the world doesn't really need another *Harry Potter* game, just like we don't need another *Star Wars* spin-off, but you can bet your backside there will be more. The franchise has been milked hard with a litany of releases, and it's difficult to imagine that even the most die-hard fans are in fever-sweats to add another *Potter* game to the pile. Especially when they discover that this is so mind-achingly dull.

We have to admit that we haven't seen the movie nor read the novel, so the latest antics of Harry, Hermione and the ginger kid were played in a vacuum, though we imagine that if you have invested yourself in book or movie you'll be content to explore the castle and grounds at your own leisure just to see what it 'actually' looks like. We'll hazard that the thrill of poking round Hogwarts will quickly wear off compared to being immersed in the books or just watching the movies.

Despite Hogwarts being a nicely detailed and substantial castle, with plenty of collectible crests to entice walking around and expanding your skill set, you're led by the hand most of the way with a long, long sprint between where you're going and where you just came from. When you're not running around, collecting crests, you're either mixing potions, or embroiled in a button- and stick-spamming magic duel with other students, or grinding your teeth in the biggest missed opportunity to ever hit a videogame, quidditch. Flying around on a broom should mean zipping through a large open space, tossing a quaffle and, y'know, playing the game. Instead, quidditch is an on-rails flight requiring minimal input from the left stick as you



parp



WORSE THAN ORDER OF THE PHOENIX **BETTER THAN** BEING GINGER

FINAL SAY:

- Hogwarts is charming
- Nice graphics
- Clunky, awkward cut-scenes
- Repetitive minigames

VERDICT: A deathly boring experience; once you've played the first 30 minutes you've essentially played the whole game.

6



AL LOWE CAN YOU GO?

Al Lowe, the creator of the original *Leisure Suit Larry*, had this to say on his humour site, allowe.com:

"All I know about *BOB* is what I've read online. VU (and later Activision, Team 17 and Codemasters) did not consult me nor discuss anything about this game with me. In fact, they've expressed no interest in me whatsoever! For a while, I hoped that they would remember to send me a review copy. Now that the reviews are in, it's just as well that they didn't! Ah, well, it can't be worse than *Magna Cum Laude*, can it? Now that the reviews are coming in, the answer is: Yes, it can! Thank you, VU Games, for keeping me completely away from this latest disaster!"



"Must I be in this?"



INFO
GENRE: ADVENTURE
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: ATARI
DEVELOPER: TEAM 17
PLAYERS: 1
PRICE: \$49.95

LEISURE SUIT LARRY: BOX OFFICE BUST

[stunned silence]



WORSE THAN EVERY PS3 GAME SO FAR
BETTER THAN SWINE FLU

Games like *Leisure Suit Larry: Box Office Bust* are more rare than you'd think.

Quite a few games over the course of this year, and indeed this generation, will rate very highly within the pages of this tome. Games like *Uncharted*, *GTAIV*, *Call of Duty 4* and many more currently occupy the top spots on the OPS dais. They're all very different games in their own right but each shares a common level of extraordinary quality.

Leisure Suit Larry: Box Office Bust, however, plumbs a brand new level of awful. This game is uniquely bad.

Box Office Bust is, without contest, the worst game available on PS3 to date. This game was quietly trickled out to stores before the press could get their hands on it, so it's been available for some time now. Why bother with such a late review? It's because a game this spectacularly terrible is a landmark event. Reviewing the worst game on PS3 is near as important

as reviewing the best one. Consider it a public service, if you will.

In *Box Office Bust* you'll play as Larry Lovage, the nephew of the original Larry and star of *Magna Cum Laude*. Your overall goal is to put the kybosh on a plot to sink a film studio via a parade of completely cocked-up game gameplay modes. Stealth, platforming, shooting, fighting... each as lame as the last. Poorly done and hopelessly derivative to begin with, the whole exercise is a total chore. Also, a quick tip: it's not clever when you have the main character point out how clichéd and pointless finding a bunch of shit within a set time limit is, and then make us do it anyway. Not even slightly.

Workmanlike graphics coupled with unacceptable stutters in the frame rate and a useless camera make looking at the game as tiresome as playing it. Don't expect to see anything titillating either – not that you'd want to, as there's really little appealing about the odd race of mutant women in *Box Office Bust*. Besides, if there was anything remotely kinky enough in *Box Office Bust* to be worth

seeing it would've been refused classification. It wasn't, but we wish it was.

The list of things we'd rather do than play *Box Office Bust* again begins at the usual wish-fulfilment zaniness and ends at, say, cleaning up a quadruple homicide.

The only thing that could've possibly saved *Box Office Bust* from eternal infamy as potentially the worst game of the decade would be humour. A couple of key zingers and some chuckle-inducing dialogue here and there certainly wouldn't have made the game playable but it would've meant the game at least got one thing right. As it stands, *Box Office Bust* is roughly about as hilarious as the holocaust. At some point during the development any wit and/or charm the series had left was quietly escorted out of the building and shot. It's so pitifully unfunny that Patrick Warburton is in the voiceover cast and we don't care. This game sucks so hard not even Puddy can save it.

Screw that. **Luke Reilly**

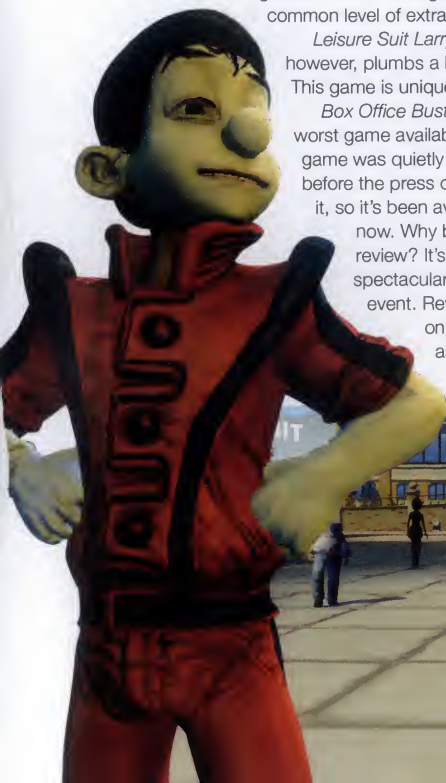
FINAL SAY:



- It's terrible. In every way
- No redeeming features. At all

VERDICT: The worst game we've played in years. An amazing new low for this generation.

1

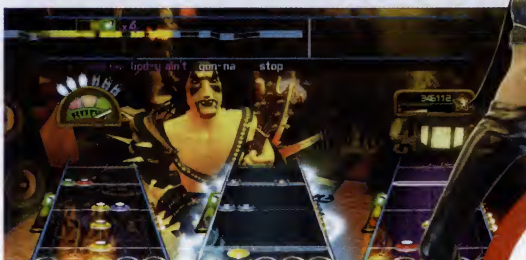
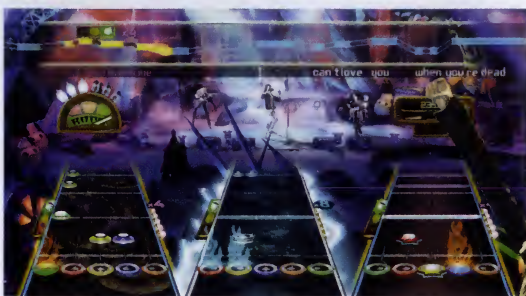


Posh Spice clones: no thanks



GUITAR HERO GREATEST HITS

And this bird you cannot change



INFO

FORMAT: PS3
GENRE: MUSIC
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION
DEVELOPER: BEENOX
PLAYERS: 1-8
PRICE: \$89.95

Guitar Hero Greatest Hits is a compilation of some of the better tracks from the original batch of *GH* titles, before they supported full band play. It's a good idea, although one that we would have welcomed far more eagerly as DLC.

A shade under 50 tracks feature on the disc itself and they're mostly passable. It boasts a better hit/miss ratio than *Guitar Hero World Tour* to be honest, even though career mode is a bit nobbled (and not entirely crucial considering every track is unlocked the moment you boot up the game).

Interestingly, the note charting seems to have changed in some fashion for basically every song – which seems somewhat unnecessary. That said, it's likely been a while since you've played any of these songs, so unless you've got some pretty authoritative muscle memory it probably won't be a huge problem.

More of an issue, however, is that changes to the charting often incorporate the purple note-string thingies for the latest guitar's slide pad. We don't like it, so we don't use it – but whether you choose to use it or not there's no getting around the fact that on account of the new gimmick you can play the first four minutes of Lynyrd Skynyrd's 'Free Bird' virtually without strumming A SINGLE NOTE. Trivialises the experience a bit.

Greatest Hits is enjoyable, sure, on account of the mostly sweet setlist. Seriously though, this game is just taking the piss. Come the end of 2009 there will have been 10 *Guitar Hero* titles released in just over three years.

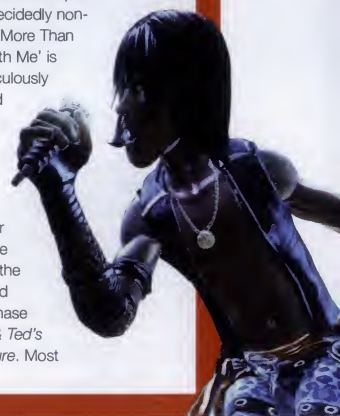
Out of all of them, *Greatest Hits* really has the least right to exist in the first place. There's nothing wrong with the idea of taking songs that have been used in

?!?!?!?!?

No Guns 'N Roses? Could the noticeable absence of past *GH* heavy hitters like 'Welcome to the Jungle' and 'Sweet Child O' Mine' mean a Gunners game is in the works, somewhere? We can't really see the guys working together for it...

PARTY ON DUDES!

'Play With Me' by Extreme is arguably the best song in the game; it's certainly the most fun. 'Play With Me' was a radio-only single by Boston funk-metal band Extreme (a band who would later top the charts with the decidedly non-funk metal track 'More Than Words'). 'Play With Me' is known for its ridiculously complex solo and insane riffs based on various classical pieces like Mozart's 'Alla Turca' and Vivaldi's 'The Four Seasons'. If you're drawing a blank, the song was featured during the mall chase sequence in *Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure*. Most triumphant.



the past and reconfiguring them for use in the present. A lot of these songs were standouts when they were initially featured on earlier editions of *Guitar Hero*, and it's great to see them back as masters and supporting full band play. The problem is, this should've been DLC for *World Tour*. We just can't figure out why it isn't. Rather than emulate the *Rock Band* concept of creating a platform and delivering a stream of quality DLC to it that's compatible with either *Rock Band* or *Rock Band 2*, *Greatest Hits* does the exact opposite. It's an island unto itself. None of the tracks are available as DLC, and you can't export the contents of the disc to your console to play it in any other *Guitar Hero* game. There's no unity between *Guitar Hero* titles, and *Greatest Hits* is no different. The fact that they're all completely standalone products is frankly becoming a pain in the arse.

✶ Luke Reilly

FINAL SAY:



- A good number of key party pleasers
- HUD improvements from *GH Metallica* feature here



- Too pricey for what you get
- No export, no cross-compatibility – that's just cheap and lazy

VERDICT: Some truly great tracks given a second lease of life, but this seriously ought to have been DLC.

7

WORSE THAN GHOSTBUSTERS
BETTER THAN TERMINATOR: SALVATION

MEETING THE EYE

Grind away long enough – which, realistically, is about an hour – and you'll unlock six episodes of the *Transformers* TV show, Generation 1-era. Prepare your rose-tinted glasses, 'cause despite the wonders of Blu-ray these cartoons are ugly.


TRANSFORMERS: REVENGE OF THE FALLEN

Cooler than the *Rocky IV* robot? Pfft...



Giant robots fighting. How do you get that wrong?

Since our deservedly glowing *Ghostbusters* review two issues ago, we remind ourselves that not all movie/game tie-ins are the skid mark on your otherwise dapper PlayStation trousers. *Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen* (ROTf), though, is more of an unfortunate fleck of chocolate on your crotch, loosened from a slightly-off Violet Crumble imitation you found in the supermarket. A lazy observer might believe it looks like a bit of turd, but it's not.

ROTf works both as a game in its own right and an accompaniment to the film: you don't need to have seen Michael Bay's latest effort to understand or appreciate what's going on. After a tutorial explaining the slightly convoluted controls the campaign is a smattering of locations around the world. Each zone in every playable city has either one or two missions (though only one needs to be completed to progress to the next zone) and the structure of each is shoot the enemy and repeat, or escort an NPC to the checkpoint, shoot the enemy and repeat. Ranged attacks – missiles, grenades, bullets, etc. – are your tools for success, which kinda goes against the spectacle and satisfaction of giant robots punching, slicing and throwing other giant robots about. While you can tap or charge  for a three hit combo or strong melee, you'll be shot at point blank, sapping your health and forcing a tactical retreat (i.e. running away) behind the nearest building to regenerate health. Melee attacks don't feel devastating at all. Throughout the entire experience, which because of its simplistic goal and mechanics really feels like 'My First Movie Tie-In Game', you're rarely pushed or challenged by your foes' barrage of missiles and flamethrowers, even though it's you

versus a flock of enemies. That's what you have to expect being a freakin' Transformer. There is human presence in some missions, both military and civilian, but they're just part of the scenery.

Like cheap chocolate, this is neither good nor bad, sugary whilst not at all fulfilling. The grandiose and explosive nature expected from this franchise is never reached. While the Transformers shift around the square, boxed off areas in a pleasing manner, clambering over buildings and running around knocking stuff over, their vehicular manifestations are lame and hard to control as the accelerator always needs to be on, even when braking, lest you transform back again. There's no real sense of weight or inertia; a combination of non-destructible buildings, a strange sense of scale and some awkward animations, especially when landing from a jump. Going into battle as one Transformer isn't much different to choosing another in the posse and they're all in need of a personality transplant. ROTf is a snack to finish – expect to knock the whole thing, both Autobot and Decepticon campaigns,



INFO

GENRE: ACTION
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION
DEVELOPER: LUXOFLUX
PLAYERS: 1-8
PRICE: \$99.95



Pictured: robot (not pictured: disguise)



over in a day – yet there's a perverse sense of accomplishment when the credits roll, despite the hit-and-miss graphics, awful music and weak sound effects.

Like that cheap chocolate knock-off, you'll curse yourself for buying it from the first bite, but still make it all the way through this forgettable fare – albeit with what looks like bits of crap on your pants. **Paul Taylor**

FINAL SAY:



- Cool transforming animation
- Satisfying though easy bite-sized missions



- Awful sound
- Rubbish melee combat

VERDICT: A day of undemanding fun, but not much more.

6

A FISHY BOX

The *Resident Evil*-style Small Items Box doesn't just let your character access loot from identical boxes scattered around the game world; it also lets every character access the same gear. If your flatmate has a save, don't be surprised if he helps himself to your Lucky Charms...

“Mental patients weave baskets because it's calming — this is the same deal”



INFO

GENRE: RPG
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: MADMAN
DEVELOPER: ASCARON ENTERTAINMENT
PLAYERS: 1-4
PRICE: \$99.95 (COLLECTORS EDITION: \$119.95)



WORSE THAN **BETTER THAN**
OBLIVION | SACRED

SACRED 2: FALLEN ANGEL

A colossal new dungeon crawler for anal-retentive rogues

The designers at Blizzard have copped a lot of flak for the visual direction they're taking with *Diablo III*. The bright, clear colours, exaggerated character designs, and cartoon-like visual effects have been slammed by some series fans as 'WoW Gayness' — a betrayal of everything that a dark dungeon crawling epic should stand for. Yet Blizzard's wisdom is self-evident. *World of Warcraft* has become the most profitable game in the universe because of its unique look, not in spite of it.

In-game visuals do not exist to meet abstract standards of realism; they're there to communicate. You can't play a game if you have no idea what's going on. Frankly, this new rendering style is one of the best things that's ever happened to gaming, and has blazed a trail for even more expressive games like *Borderlands* to follow. 'WoW Gayness' is the future.

Yet this innovation has been studiously avoided by the creators of *Sacred 2: Fallen Angel*. Viewed up close, and side on, the characters and monsters of this fantasy stat-grinding epic look exactly like the rampant heroes of a heavy metal album cover. The problem is that during

play, your character is not generally viewed up close and side-on. You can zoom right in, if you wish, but this only serves to allow enemies to sneak up on you — and destroys your

sense of direction into the bargain. Since zoom is your enemy, you always resort to viewing your little adventurer from a top-down view, watching his endless conflicts with wandering monsters a lot like a man with a microscope studies the creatures that swarm and multiply in a drop of water. Play is a fiddly and chaotic exercise.

Likewise, Ascaron has built this game world of dubious aesthetic values. The lighting effects are vivid, and at times gorgeous, but they detract from one's comprehension of events. Then there's the canopy of vegetation, no doubt inspired by the deep primeval forests that are so central to German notions of communion with nature. Well and good, but it doesn't change the reality that all that leafy shade makes it that much harder to tell what's going on. Were it not for the little red blobs on the mini-map, you might never know if someone was taking pot shots at you from the undergrowth.

Yes, this is a very, very German game. The code has been laced with every last conflicting aspect of Teutonic culture; obsession with minute details to the point of counter-productive time-wasting, and being most industrious in one's mistrust of industrialism.

The female character designs look like the shop window dummies of fetish stores that have come to life; one can almost imagine them crying 'scheiße!' instead of drawing from their mangled, poorly-acted voice banks. Likewise, cheesy techno music overpowers the minimal background FX when generic goons and monsters swarm in. The handful of tracks supplied by metal heads Blind Guardian are

equally malapropos. We didn't detect any explicit poop fetish, though come to think of it the uninspired dungeons scattered across the map consisted of winding brown, tubular passages; it's not outside the realm of possibility.

In terms of acreage, the size of the game world is on a par with *Fallout 3* or *Oblivion*; though a lot of it consists of paths winding through inaccessible tracts of forest. Rendered in identikit fashion by endlessly repeated (if lovingly crafted) generic objects, one does not feel as if one is really exploring. One feels... corralled. Likewise, the mission objectives all feel like completely arbitrary time-consuming contrivances. Whether you stick to the critical path, or gobble up every side mission in sight, the whole exercise will feel repetitive.

To its credit, the flipside is that *Sacred 2* is an extremely consistent experience — grinding a-go-go. Satisfaction derives not from the ends, but the means: killing thousands of monsters and nicking their stuff.

This is a chill-out game, basically; as long as your most devastating spell attacks are assigned to the face buttons, you're golden. Just follow the quest arrows, and spank everyone in your path. Rinse and repeat. Mental patients weave baskets because it's calming — this is the same deal.

Assuming you hunt around and complete every last side-quest, and purge every last secret dungeon, there's 30 hours of play in both the evil and good campaigns. Obsession over obtuse stats and skill benefits will be rewarded with marginally different play experiences in each of the six preposterous character classes.





➤ **Skipping gone wrong**

MANUAL LABOUR

The developers at Ascaron have defied the norms of conventional game design by choosing not to include an in-depth, un-skippable tutorial mode. Instead, if you wish to have any real idea of how the character classes differ, what their skills and 'Combat Arts' are for, which god they should pray to, and so forth, you should digest the manual before booting up. The upshot: you can jump straight in to the grinding.



"Why the long face? Snarf!" ➤



Possibly the most impractical motorbike ever made ➤

It's a game you can get lost in, but you never forget its flaws. Did we mention the horrible voice acting, and the corny as hell script? Or how the staggeringly complex item and skill systems are accessed via a willfully awkward menu system? Or how this is yet another RPG where your average citizen will happily stand by while you smash all the barrels in his house?

Sacred 2 should only be bought by those who consider grinding to be an end in itself. If that's you, then there's a ton of value in here. If it isn't, then you'll get better mileage elsewhere. **James Cottee**

FINAL SAY:



- Gigantic game world packed with baddies and loot
- Mega-deep stat system will keep wonks rapt for hours



- It feels very slapped-together
- Gameplay is ultimately simplistic and repetitive

VERDICT: If you've clocked *Oblivion* and crave more, give it a go.

6

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INTERMISSION

On the screen

CINEMAS DIRECTOR: STEPHEN SOMMERS | **CAST:** DENNIS QUAID, SIENNA MILLER, CHRISTOPHER ECCLESTON | **IN CINEMAS NOW**

G.I. JOE: THE RISE OF COBRA (TBC)

And the toys just keep on coming. Hasbro's other big masculine action figure line has made it to the silver screen, though without as much fanfare or hype as Michael "giant robots" Bay's woefully bloated effort. The excuse for trotting out a static toy line in another movie is surely propelled by the frothing *Transformers* generated and the millions of dollars fleeced from the wallets of suckers keen to see, firstly, giant robots smacking each other around and, secondly, toys from their childhood legitimised in cinema. Whether it's lucky for us or not, it's certainly going to be a different flavour of all-out action compared to *Transformers* as *G.I. Joe* has been handled by *The Mummy*

director Stephen Sommers. It's not without shades of *Fantastic Four* or the giant robot movie though, as the plot thematically delves straight in where the latter left off: freedom. Or, more specifically, American freedom. And the Yanks saving the world, with explosions, and Sienna Miller (who is easy on the eye even on the wrong end of a hangover) wrapped in black leather. Oh, she's the Baroness, the evil one. Still, Christopher "Dr Who" Eccleston lends his acting chops and indicates that, just maybe, there'll be some plot and balanced dialogue while *3rd Rock From The Sun*'s Joseph Gordon-Levitt spawns a so-that's-what-he's-been-doing moment. Expect a sequel real soon. Probably.

ALSO IN CINEMAS...

Tyson (TBC)

Director: James Toback
Cast: Mike Tyson

Attempting to explore and present the person behind their myth or legend is no easy feat. A nod goes to Toback for daring to probe the ear munching, jailed-for-rape, face-like-a-mad-bastard Mike Tyson in this doco, built from 30 hours of interviews. Probably not a great first-date movie.

Anvil! The Story of Anvil (TBC)

Director: Sacha Gervasi
Cast: Steve 'Lips' Kudlow, Robb Reiner

A rock 'n roll doco about two guys who supported the world's best metal bands in the '80s and never hit the stardom they deserved. Bound to convert even the most fervent anti-metal heads. The film premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in January 2008 and won Audience Awards at the 2008 Sydney Film Festival, LA Film Festival and Galway International Film Festival.

Push (TBC)

Director: Paul McGuigan
Cast: Chris Evans, Dakota Fanning

Take one part *Heroes*, *Wanted*, and several lashings of *X-Men* and you have this story about dudes and chicks with super-powers hiding from the US government. The frantic action and chaotic plot probably delivers more style than substance.



THE BUZZ What's really going on behind-the-scenes

Ever wondered why there was no Iron Man in your *Hulk*, or Spidey swinging in on *Fantastic Four*? That's changing. Back in 2007, Marvel decided they'd had enough of licensing out their comic properties to different studios and instead retained control of their

superheroes. It would both streamline the process involved in getting their characters off the pages and into the cinema, and the vision for upcoming Marvel movies. The most immediate result is that the next time you see the Hulk will be in *The Avengers*, due

out 2012. Marvel Studios president of production Kevin Feige, said "It will have been four years since [Hulk] was in a movie by that point. We're just starting the story. I was on the phone with Zak Penn this morning ...he's going to work on the outline this [winter]."

BLU-RAY | **DIRECTOR:** TODD PHILLIPS | **CAST:** LUKE WILSON, WILL FERRELL, VINCE VAUGHN, JEREMY PIVEN, ELEN POMPEO

OLD SCHOOL (MA15+)

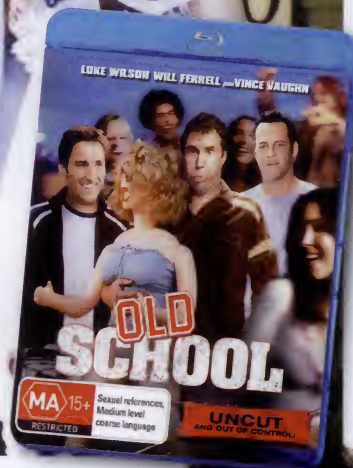
Old School really marked the arrival of the Frat Pack on the Hollywood comedy scene – paving the way for a cascade of comedies featuring 30-something-year-old men who refuse to grow up. These flicks have been overshadowed recently by the raunchy yet heartfelt comedies of the likes of Judd Apatow, but are making a comeback thanks to *The Hangover*. It certainly shouldn't go unmentioned *Old School* director Todd Phillips helmed *The Hangover* too.

Old School really is one of the best comedies for generation Xers in the past decade. A trio of thirty-something muddies tries to recapture the outrageous, irrepressible fun of their college years by starting their own off-campus frat house. Mitch, Frank and Beanie have all reached a crossroads in their lives. They can choose to be responsible adults, with wives, families and steady jobs – or they can postpone adulthood in favor of the reckless abandon of frat house living with all the fun and none of the education. No contest.

EXTRAS: 6

VERDICT: *Old School* gets better with age. Better yet, it's a movie we find that women just don't 'get' – which makes it manly.

9



TRANSFORMERS: THE MOVIE

(PG)

Director: Nelson Shin
Cast: Orson Welles, Leonard Nimoy, Judd Nelson, Eric Idle, Peter Cullen

About the only thing we remembered about this movie was that it killed most of the Autobots we had in our toyboxes. It's aged a bit.

EXTRAS: 6

VERDICT: Fun and corny, but perhaps best remembered instead

6



GRUMPY OLD MEN (PG)

Director: Donald Petrie
Cast: Jack Lemmon, Walter Matthau, Ann-Margret, Burgess Meredith

Next-door neighbours John Gustafson and Max Goldman are grumpy old men whose long-running feud becomes all out war when an attractive widow moves into the house across the street. Worth the price of admission alone for Burgess Meredith's (Mickey from *Rocky*) comic timing.

EXTRAS: 5

VERDICT: You can't buy the kind of chemistry these guys have

8



THE LONGEST DAY (PG)

Directors: Ken Annakin, Andrew Marton, Bernhard Wicki
Cast: Robert Mitchum, Sean Connery, John Wayne, Richard Burton

Told from the perspectives of both sides, this is a fascinating hour-by-hour look at the events that determined the outcome of one of the most important battles ever – D-Day, June 6, 1944.

EXTRAS: 8

VERDICT: A truly epic cinematic achievement. Influential

9



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...
The Hangover
Same director, same spirit

INTERMISSION

On the box



HOTTEST 100 ON BLU-RAY

If you want the best quality picture and sound you need Blu-ray - there are no two ways about it. If you want the best Blu-ray movies money can buy, look no further than this definitive top 100!

300

A visually spectacular tale of valour and sacrifice. A spectacle.

THE 40-YEAR-OLD VIRGIN

Hilarious and heartfelt, marked the arrival of comedy king Judd Apatow.

BAD SANTA

Crude, rude Christmas comedy with a heart of gold. Perfect for the silly season.

BAND OF BROTHERS

This true WWII story is one of the best TV miniseries ever. Epic and moving.

BATMAN BEGINS

A fantastic reboot and one of the best comic book flicks ever.

BIG TROUBLE IN LITTLE CHINA

Classic '80s action featuring Kurt Russell in a singlet.

BLACK HAWK DOWN

The violent and confronting true story of a simple mission gone wrong.

BLADE RUNNER

The revered sci-fi classic has never looked better than this.

BLAZING SADDLES

Mel Brooks' masterpiece is one of the best comedies ever.

BLOOD DIAMOND

A hugely confronting look into the African diamond trade.

BOLT

Disney's best non-Pixar CGI flick to date. Sweet and funny.

THE BOURNE TRILOGY

The hard-hitting action trilogy that nearly stopped Bond in his tracks.

BULLITT

The car chase classic featuring Steve McQueen at his coolest.

BUTCH CASSIDY AND THE SUNDANCE KID

Paul Newman and Robert Redford team up for this all-time fave.

CASINO ROYALE

Bond is reborn, leaner and meaner than ever!

COMMANDO

Schwarzenegger at his campy '80s best. A guilty pleasure.

CON AIR

Likeable popcorn action fare that nobody likes to admit they enjoy.

THE DARK KNIGHT

A spot-on comic adaptation featuring Heath Ledger's Oscar-winning Joker.

DAYS OF THUNDER

Tom Cruise blows, but *Days of Thunder* is practically a rite of passage.

THE DEPARTED

Razor-sharp dialogue and uncompromising drama from Martin Scorsese.

DIE HARD QUADRILogy

Possibly the manliest action franchise around. Completely essential.

THE DIRTY DOZEN

One of the roughest, toughest WWII films ever made. Don't miss it! They certainly don't make them like this anymore.

EARTH

An amazing visual experience. Earth as you've never seen it before. Truly essential viewing for all Earthlings.

ENEMY OF THE STATE

A surprisingly tight thriller that hasn't really aged a bit.

ENTER THE DRAGON

Classic kung-fu action starring the untouchable Bruce Lee.

ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK

Essential sci-fi action and one of the greatest of its generation.

EVIL DEAD II

We owe more to this cult B-grade horror schlock than we realise.

FALLING DOWN

Urban drama elevated by a particularly powerful performance from Michael Douglas.

FERRIS BUELLER'S DAY OFF

One of the best comedies of the '80s. Essential.

FLAGS OF OUR FATHERS

A powerful war film mixing action and drama. A true story.

FORGETTING SARAH MARSHALL

Another hit in the new wave of crude but cute comedies.

FULL METAL JACKET

The Stanley Kubrick classic featuring some of the great dialogue ever.

GHOSTBUSTERS

Unmissable '80s fare that defined an entire generation. Who you gonna call?

THE GODFATHER TRILOGY

One of the most respected film franchises of all time.

GOLDFINGER

Sean Connery's best Bond flick, which makes it THE best Bond flick.

GOODFELLAS

Scorsese's answer to *The Godfather* is a modern classic, rarely bettered.





GRAN TORINO

A powerful and emotional drama about identity and being a man.

GRUMPY OLD MEN

Comedy gold featuring two all-time comedy legends, Jack Lemmon and Walter Matthau.

HELLBOY

Kooky comic action with great characters. A rare treat from a visionary director.

HIGHLANDER

Classic action fare. There can be only one.

I, ROBOT

Top effects and an interesting plot make this well worth it.

INDEPENDENCE DAY

Big, dumb action that looks a treat on Blu-ray.

IRON MAN

The surprise smash of 2008. This is how you make a comic book movie.

JUNO

A cute comedy with a real story to tell.

KILL BILL - VOLUME 1

Tarantino's homage to chop-socky is a firm fave.

KING KONG

This blockbuster is long but looks great on Blu-ray.

KISS KISS BANG BANG

An awesome action mystery from the creator of *Lethal Weapon*.

KNOCKED UP

Offensive and sentimental in equal measure. Fantastic stuff.

KUNG FU PANDA

Arguably the best non-Pixar CGI flick to date.

LA CONFIDENTIAL

A well-crafted mystery. Hooks you in.

LETHAL WEAPON

The greatest Christmas movie this side of *Die Hard*. The awesome sequel is also available on Blu-ray.

THE LONGEST DAY

One of the biggest war films ever made.

MAN ON FIRE

A hard-nosed revenge flick. Hits home, a good watch.

THE MATRIX

One of the defining sci-fi flicks of our generation.

MONTY PYTHON'S LIFE OF BRIAN

Endlessly quoted, one of the best comedies ever.

MR. & MRS. SMITH

A fun action comedy from the director of *The Bourne Identity*.

NATIONAL LAMPOON'S CHRISTMAS VACATION

The greatest Christmas movie this side of *Lethal Weapon*.

NO COUNTRY FOR OLD MEN

A bold and tense thriller from the Coen Brothers that hits hard.

OCEAN'S ELEVEN

Great cast, sharp story, great fun.

OLD SCHOOL

One of the funniest films of the past decade.

PREDATOR

A Schwarzenegger must. Don't miss it.

QUANTUM OF SOLACE

Bond's hard-as-nails rebirth continues.

RAMBO

They don't make action movies like this anymore. Incredibly violent stuff. Righteous though.

RATATOUILLE

Another reason Pixar is one of the most consistent studios around.

RESERVOIR DOGS

Tarantino's blood-splattered debut is still remarkable.

ROBOCOP

Part man, part machine, all cop. Can you fly, Bobby?

THE ROCK

Connery steals the show in this unpretentious action fest.

ROCKY

Every man should own this movie. No excuses.

RONIN

This De Niro/Reno thriller is a benchmark for car chases, thought by many to be superior to even the venerable *Bullitt*.

SHOOTER

An old-school mash of *Bourne* and *Rambo*. A great action thriller.

SIN CITY

The visually arresting film noir smash looks great in HD.

SPEED

The action hit of the '90s is better than you remember it.

SPIDER-MAN TRILOGY

The entire comic book phenomenon in one pack. The third one is still a bit crap.

SPY GAME

Robert Redford and Brad Pitt team up in this taut thriller.

STARGATE

The sci-fi fave that launched the hugely successful TV show.

STARSHIP TROOPERS

A loud and brash sci-fi blaster that's smarter than it looks.

STARSKY & HUTCH

The comedy ensemble cast makes this more than worth a watch.

SUPERBAD

A crude but clever comedy about growing up.

TAKEN

A no-nonsense action thriller that pulls no punches.

TALLADEGA NIGHTS: THE BALLAD OF RICKY BOBBY

Will Ferrell and John C. Reilly at their comedic best.

TANGO & CASH

This slightly silly buddy-cop action comedy is still top fun.

THE TERMINATOR

The movie that preceded the great sci-fi film ever made.

TERMINATOR 2: JUDGEMENT DAY

The greatest sci-fi film ever made. A Blu-ray must. Seriously.

THERE WILL BE BLOOD

Rock solid drama featuring the award-winning Daniel Day Lewis.

THE THING

John Carpenter's sci-fi fave is one of the best thrillers ever.

TOP GEAR: POLAR SPECIAL

The *Top Gear* lads drive to the North Pole. It really is one of the most entertaining TV shows around.

TOP GUN

Highflying '80s action. It's okay to tear up when Goose dies.

TOTAL RECALL

Get your arse to Mars with this sci-fi great.

TRANSFORMERS

The big-screen blockbuster is a must on Blu-ray.

THE TRANSPORTER

Campy action, extremely enjoyable to watch.

TROPIC THUNDER

Easily one of the 2008's best comedies. Must watch.

THE TRUMAN SHOW

His whole life is a TV show. Clever, unique and touching.

UNDER SIEGE

This cheesy *Die Hard* rip-off is still a great ride. Action when Seagal only had one chin.

V FOR VENDETTA

The graphic novel comes to life thanks to The Wachowski Brothers.

WALL-E

One of Pixar's greatest achievements. Bold, intelligent, inspirational.

WE WERE SOLDIERS

An emotional and violent retelling of the first US battle in Vietnam.

WELCOME TO THE JUNGLE

Well-executed buddy comedy. The Rock is a likeable lead.

THE WILD BUNCH

This wild and violent Western has become a true classic.

THE WRESTLER

A poignant story about a man who can't give up the one thing he has.

X-MEN TRILOGY

This blockbuster comic book trilogy is essential for action fans.



SPEED THRILLS

OPS chats to Justin Lin, director of *Fast & Furious*, about his high-octane muscle movie

OPS: Why did you decide to come back with the entire cast?

JL: It was fun doing the last one, and I think the unique thing about the last one was kind of taking this franchise and introducing another life style – drifting. It actually started when Vin came to do the cameo and we talked about his relationship with Han and all these things. He kind of got me excited about the characters and I thought if we're going to do it again, it would have to be with all four characters – that became the challenge.

OPS: How did you convince them?

JL: I love sequels but only when it's out of respect to the characters and not to recycle. To acknowledge

that there has been time apart and see what these characters have been doing, and also thematically what's the extension from the first film. I thought the first film was very unique in that it was kind of exploring the theme of family, not in a traditional way, but through their car love of cars. I felt we needed to extend on that, so I developed the theme of sacrifice. Once I was able to personally grasp that, it became much easier to talk to everybody else and convince them to do it.

OPS: In a way it's like the second and third films don't exist, you're going from the first to the fourth...

JL: Thematically it runs through, it's a very unique franchise in that, even stylistically it has changed a lot. In the first one that world was so new to everybody. But at the same time, once we were here in the fourth one, I really felt like the appreciation of the aesthetic is not going to be about the painting or the stickers on the cars, it's going to be about the people and even the way the cars are designed; and the fact that these characters are older now. Their appreciation for cars is going to be different than it was seven years ago.

OPS: How challenging is it for you to do the action scenes with the cars?

JL: It's always a challenge, especially when the goals are to do everything practically; so there were a couple stunts that we had to do over and over again, because when you crash cars at high speed, sometimes it doesn't end up the way you want it. But it was great, I have more knowledge, I feel like I'm better...you know.

OPS: Vin's career really shot off after the first film and in this one he's in a more delicate place. Is this kind of like a comeback movie for him?

JL: You'll have to ask him that. For me it was really just focusing on the character. I felt there is a reason why people really loved him in the first film. The hardest thing was to find out what the challenges were for him. I felt like at the end of that movie he kind of had his arc, but I'm not going to revisit that. That's why I think it's a good idea for him to explore the theme of sacrifice. I think it really made the character more interesting for me when developing it. I think when people see, they will see that wow, this is later and he's got more challenges this time as a person.

OPS: We hear Porsche was very pro-active? Who else was pro-active in trying to participate?

JL: They were all pretty pro-active, but I had to turn down a lot of them. I didn't find the new domestic cars as interesting as the old ones. So we actually said no thanks but we're going to go back and use the Chevelle, the old Charger – for me that was a great find. But I feel I'm here to serve the characters and I just can't see the characters driving a new Dodge or whatever. It's good to know that we have the backing of the studio to say look let's just try to serve the characters.

OPS: How many cars did you crash?

JL: I think this time it was three figures, probably over a hundred. We actually lost a car, it went off a cable and it went down a 300 foot cliff, and we picked it back up and put on some body parts and rolled it again. So it was a lot on this one – we had to do things over and over again.

OPS: Did you have any idea that you would be able to come back and have this kind of following?

JL: I really didn't. I come from the indie world so for me it's very simple. I want to work with people.



DVD DIRECTOR: JUSTIN LIN | CAST: VIN DIESEL, PAUL WALKER, MICHELLE RODRIGUEZ, JORDANA BREWSTER

FAST & FURIOUS (M)

At the time of print this film has grossed a total of US\$349,314,604 worldwide and is the second highest-grossing film in the car genre, behind *Cars* – which is a Pixar film so is hardly fair. Pixar films print money.

This is actually quite surprising. *Fast & Furious* isn't strictly a bad movie – we just wouldn't have picked it as the second most popular automobile-orientated film of all time.

This fourth entry in *The Fast and the Furious* franchise is an interquel of sorts, and reunites the original four stars: Michelle Rodriguez, Paul Walker, Jordana Brewster, and Vin Diesel. When Letty is killed in LA Dominic returns to the City of Angels (where he's still a wanted man) to seek out the man responsible. Against his will he's forced to re-team with his old partner Brian, who's undercover for the FBI. Car chase, car chase, hot girls, car chase, hot girls, car chase, bad guys get nailed... there's little you won't see coming.

EXTRAS: 8

VERDICT: The script really doesn't have much in the way of cajones, but the action is slick and regular.

6

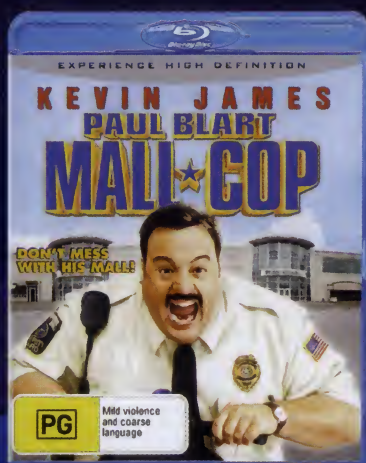




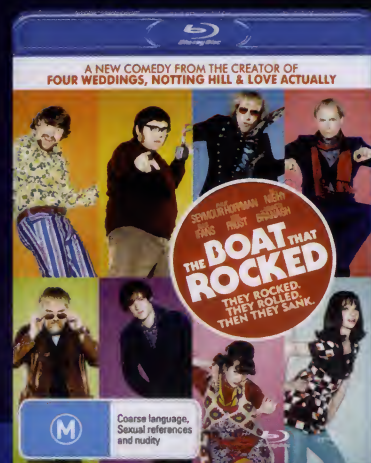
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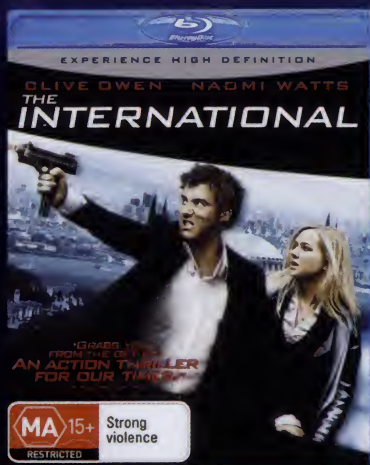
5 August



5 August



12 August



19 August



26 August



26 August

Give your fingers a break
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PlayStation Network: Free to join, free to play!

LATEST

Download this...

Fight Night Round 4 - DLC



New gloves, shorts and trunks are all available, as well as 'gameplay sliders'. All for free. The option to use button instead of sticks will be next.

Bayonetta



This video shows off a combination of jumping mechanics, the battle system, some impossible high heels and the world's most ridiculous chainsaw.

Red Baron Arcade - demo



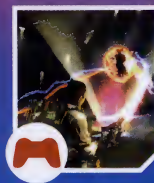
Arcade flight game update from a '90s PC classic where the Allies are the enemy and planes are made of wood. Just nobody light a match, okay?

Batman: Arkham Asylum



We recommend checking out all of the trailers as they set the tone of the game. If you had to pick one, choose the one with fighting.

Ghostbusters - demo



What do you mean you haven't got this yet? Grab this demo immediately. We weren't banging on about how cool it is for nothing!

NEWS

VIDZONE

We tested VidZone, the free-to-download-and-play music-video streaming service from the PSN, last month in issue 32. Since, then the content and quality have grown beyond the initial field of 10,000 videos. As physics dictates, this increased mass means that it's more likely to suck people in. Turn it on, load up a video, and turn around. There will now be, guaranteed, a crowd of people behind you in your lounge room and more yearning to get inside, to look for their favourite videos and then to try and stump it with obscure artists. We thought we ought to highlight VidZone again, as last month we said there was way more rich content on RAGE. That gap between content and ease of use is rapidly closing. We're happily surprised



how distracting it is playing Midnight Oil, Bruce Springsteen, Michael Jackson and James Brown dispersed with N.E.R.D., Jay Z, and DJ Jazzy Jeff. Just don't be shocked if you lose an entire afternoon doing so.

WIPEOUT FURY

Finally! The anti-grav racer was overdue for an upgrade, and this looks like it will be to Wipeout HD what Paradise was to the Burnout franchise: bigger and brutal. 13 new ship models, eight new tracks (we're still hanging out for a 2097 pack, though) and three more game modes, including rechargeable shields in Zone mode. The design of the tracks and ships has been refined, including structures that, according to Marcus Tanner, Art Director on Wipeout Fury, "can be likened to a piece of music providing the track with a visual melody, rhythm and harmony." We expect nothing less.



CAPCOM CLASSICS

We're hoping that our gaming brethren in the States are a litmus test for everyone else in the world, as a virtual truckload of Capcom PSP and PSone games have been unleashed on the US PSN. Resident

Evil 2 and 3, Dino Crisis, Darkstalkers and Street Fighter Alpha 3 Max are a few of the 10 titles available. At the time of going to print we're unsure when we'll see them on the Australian store, but you'll be the first to know when we do.



ONLINE REVIEWS



GENRE: SHOOTER
DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT
DEVELOPER: IMMERSION
SOFTWARE, TIMELINE INTERACTIVE
PLAYERS: 1-16
PRICE: \$15.95

CELLFACTOR: PSYCHOKINETIC WARS

It's not the size of your brain, it's how you abuse it and others

People often say that humans only use 10 per cent of their brain, alluding to the mysterious, untapped 90 per cent that could, perhaps, offer remarkable powers like telekinesis. The fact is that whole '10 per cent deal' proved to be BS and all who espouse it should be speared by unicorns.

That said, the idea of using your mind as a meaty battery for super powers is one that strikes a chord with many, and is the basis for *CellFactor: Psychokinetic Wars*.

Anyone who's played *Unreal Tournament* is going to feel very at home here as the whole caper feels like a pared down version of that beefy arena shooter. However, props must go to the developers for adding a psychic wrinkle to the proceedings. See, most of these tournament-based, multiplayer gun fests rely on the ability to find the big gun first. After a while it gets a tad dull spawning, armed with nothing but a sharpened toothbrush, only to get taken out by the dude with the homing missile launcher. Again, and again, and again.

With *CellFactor* the player can choose from one of three combatant types. There's Bishop: she looks like one of those shiny chick-robots in that Bjork film clip with robo-rooting, and has the highest psychokinetic power level. She can produce a shield, rip parts of her environment out, charge them and fang them at her enemies – plus she can fly. Flying uses up loads of her energy but it's quite a sight when she hovers over the crest of a wall and blasts you into pieces. That's the other thing; she uses weapons differently to the other classes. Say she picks up a shotgun – suddenly she can

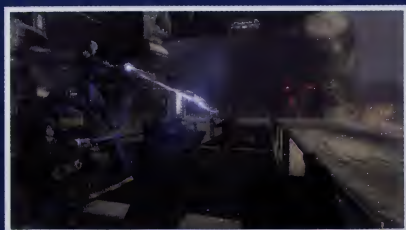


fire powerful balls of plasma. An assault rifle becomes a crackling beam of energy and so on. The final part of her arsenal is a special move where she sends a double-handed blast of energy and rubble at anyone unfortunate enough to be in her way.

Black Op is the second, and default class. When Black Op picks up a gun he uses it as a gun. He has a shield and the ability to throw bits of his environment but can also teleport: up, down, further along the path. It's immensely satisfying when an enemy thinks they've got you and you simply teleport behind them and bust a cap in their cybernetic arses.

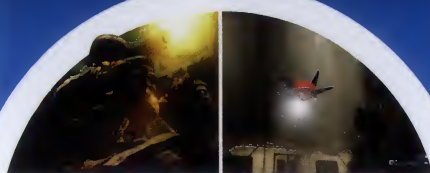
The third and final class is Guardian: and this cat is all brawn. He carries a weapon in each hand so you could hold a shotgun and a sniper rifle or a rocket launcher and an assault rifle – firing them both at the same time. His one psychic power is that he can double jump – but if you're playing as the Guardian the only reason to leave the battlefield is to get more ammo. Each class has a series of challenges to complete, specific to their skill set, not to mention a large, if unimaginative, selection of multiplayer games.

The graphics are solid, the level design more than adequate and the game itself surprisingly fun. Plus it's \$15.95 – so unless you loathe tournament shooters you might want to grab this one. **A** Anthony O'Connor



DO YOU LIKE MY BOT?

As you complete various challenges from the various classes you unlock skins, skills and various powers to help your character along. Why not get in early and beat the noob rush?



WORSE THAN KILLZONE 2 **BETTER THAN** TERMINATOR SALVATION

FINAL SAY:



- Large maps brimming with power-ups
- Using your mind powers is a hoot



- It's really a poor man's *Unreal Tournament*
- Gets repetitive pretty quickly

VERDICT: *CellFactor: Psychokinetic Wars* is an easy-to-pick-up game that's loads of fun if you play it casually. It's not the next *Warhawk* though.

7

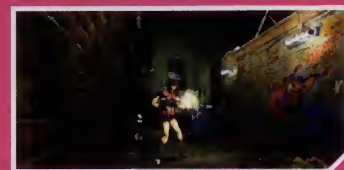
WE WANT IT!

The PSN is a benign version of a future computer that could launch a nuclear weapon but instead has megabyte-sized goodies to envelope your PS3 and PSP. Check it out.



Rock Band DLC

A few of Green Day's latest songs are ripe for downloading to *RB* now. Sure, modern stuff's okay, but the songs we'd most like to see are 'Basket Case' and 'Nice Guys Finish Last'.



Capcom PSone classics

The US store has seen *Resident Evil: Director's Cut* released with the promise of more on the way.



Fate: Unlimited Codes

Takes the lore from a Japanese eroge (it means, we think, 'saucy erotic') visual novel, though minus the sauce.



Pixel Junk Shooter

The water-and-lava themed blaster sees you controlling a ship through a series of caves, solving puzzles by transforming the landscape and battling elemental forces. And plants.



PlayStation®
Network

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THE GAME IS JUST THE START

With PLAYSTATION®3 you can start streaming FREE music videos on-demand from Vidzone via PlayStation®Network. Create the perfect playlist to suit your party and then play it all on the biggest TV screen you can find.

Vidzone available as a FREE download from the PlayStation®Store.



PLAYSTATION.3



MUSIC
VIDEOS

vidzone

10 THINGS TO DO IN... PROTOTYPE

inFamous is the better game; slicker, tidier with a story that intrigues – but you can't go past the mighty *Prototype* for gilet spattering gore-tastic death-bringing. Here's a few macabre moves you may not have thought of. Please to enjoy...



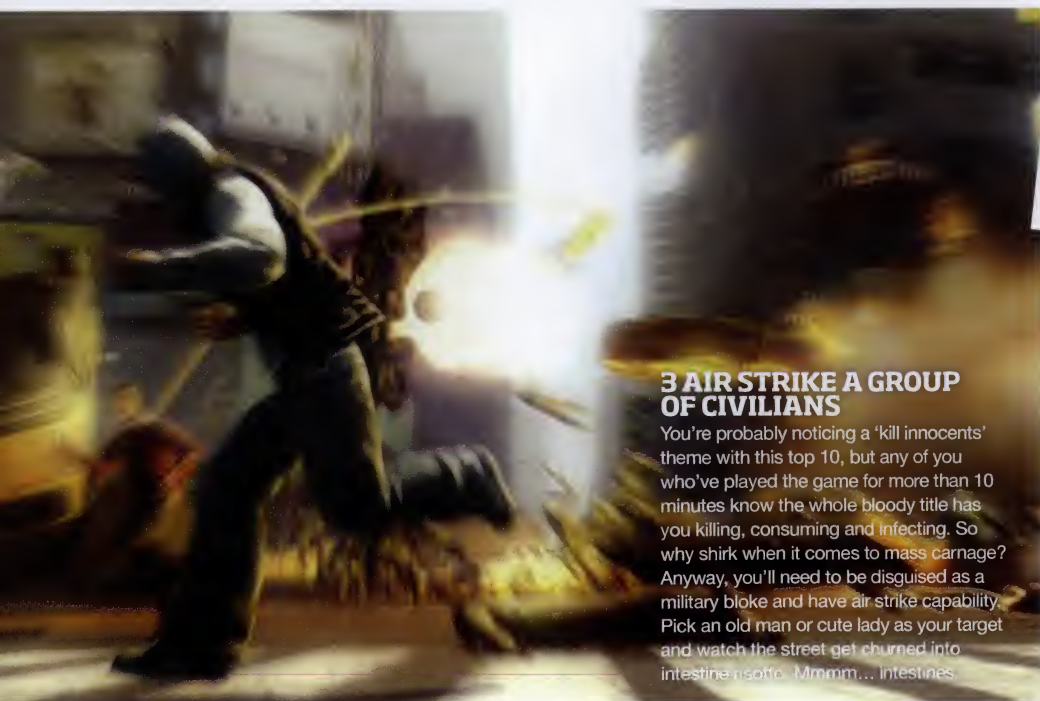
1 BASE AND HIVE HUNTER!

One awesome ability you have to earn in *Prototype* is being able to jack tanks and, later on, helicopters. Combine that with air strikes, the fact you can throw almost anything and perform devastator moves – both hives and army bases can be destroyed without too much trouble. But how many can you do without dying? Sure it's easy enough to reduce an army base to rubble and then get shot to pieces but can you do three, four, five in a row without dying? If so, show us proof. We dare you.



2 DOB IN EVERYONE UNTIL PARANOIA REIGNS

You'll need to be in a military disguise and you'll need the patsy power. This is where you'll point to another grunt, accusing him of being you and his mates will blow him away. Then they'll turn on you. If you're quick enough, however, you can sprint around the block, come back to the same place, and start pointing the finger anew. We managed to have eight innocent men killed by their comrades in a row. Care to try and top it?



3 AIR STRIKE A GROUP OF CIVILIANS

You're probably noticing a 'kill innocents' theme with this top 10, but any of you who've played the game for more than 10 minutes know the whole bloody title has you killing, consuming and infecting. So why shirk when it comes to mass carnage? Anyway, you'll need to be disguised as a military bloke and have air strike capability. Pick an old man or cute lady as your target and watch the street get churned into intestine isotop. Mmmm... intestines.



4 BISECT THE POPULACE

It's been said that the Whip Fist is too powerful and can be used pretty much for the rest of the game. While we don't agree with that assertion, it certainly is a fun mutation. Especially with the street sweeper upgrade. To get the most out of this you'll want to get it as early as you can, and use it only a sunny day. You activate the move by pressing @ then Ⓐ. Your Whip Fist will shoot out and, in a vicious arc, quite literally, cut dozens of people in two, horizontally. Standing in a pile of lower and upper torsos we defy any gamer with a functioning brain not to nod with grisly satisfaction. Note: the blade you get later in the game can also do the job, you just need to be a wee bit closer.



5 NO TOUCHING THE GROUND!

This is just for shits and giggles but after you get the power to glide and various air dashes it's fun to see how far along the map you can go without touching the ground. Now that means any flat surface so the tops of buildings don't count. We'll allow the sides of buildings but the best strategy seems to be air dash, glide, then use remaining air dashes until you hit the side of a skyscraper, leap off and do it all again.

6 SKITTLIN'! AKA: BODY BOWLING!

Righto, here's what we want you to do. Have your shield or armour on and run down the longest street you can, knocking cars, people, tanks and the like out of your way. See how long a streak of mayhem you can make before someone wises up and shoots you in the mouth with a tank. If you make it across one side of the island to the other - that's a strike. Halfway is a spare and anything else is piss weak.



7 BRAIN HUNTER

Various people around the place have memories. More specifically memories you need to piece together who or rather what you are. These memories can be accessed in side missions, but we're talking about tearing around the streets, consuming people with the red head and brain icon above them. There are some seriously messed up memories out there.



8 EAT A STREET

Pick a road, any road, give yourself a starting point and an end point and see if you can get from A to B consuming all the way. No breaks for finding the next victim (so you'll want a crowded street) and no chasing anyone (so stay stealthy for as long as you can). Not only is this visually hilarious but it'll also give you loads of EP and make you laugh like a cartoony super villain. Note: you'll probably want the stealth consume upgrade for this. Another note: if you have devastator moves in your upgrades you could do a lot worse than unleashing them at the end of your feeding frenzy.

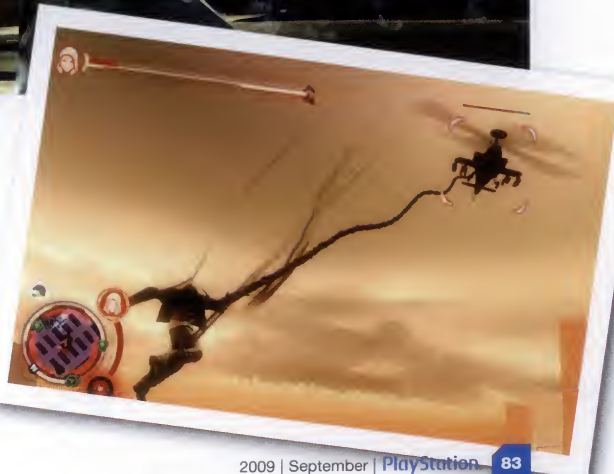


9 I HATE THAT GUY!

Pick someone at random. Maybe they're infected, maybe they're an army dude or maybe they just have stupid pants. In fact, go with the stupid pants. Grab the daft-stride-wearing gimp, run up a high building and either a) throw them at a helicopter b) drop them and fall next to them, watching as they scream all the way down or c) get the upgrade that let's you ride people like skateboards and drop-in from the top of a skyscraper. Fun for the whole family. The Manson Family, that is.

10 CHOP SHOP CHOPPERS

Once you have the Whip Fist upgrade that allows you to snatch choppers, see how many you can jack in a row without touching any surface or dying. It goes with saying that you'll probably want to be in the middle of a cluster of choppers. It's handy to be a little higher than them too. Once you've done 15 or so the game goes mental and rockets, choppers, tanks, Hunters and every bastard will be braying for your blood. Good times. Yep, good times.



INDEX

All the games that matter on PS3!

WANTED

My precious...

AGENT

AGENT

Yonks back we were promised a brand new, PS3-exclusive IP from Rockstar Games. Finally they've let about 17 words about it out, promising a "paranoid journey" into a 1970s spy world of Cold War espionage. Touted as the ultimate action game – we'll see, Mr Bond, we'll see... (strokes cat for dramatic effect)

DJ HERO

Wa-hey! More plastic peripherals to find cupboard space for. This one's definitely shaping up as being imminently spring cleaning-worthy though, coupling a placky turntable with a *Guitar Hero*-esque adventure in 'turntablism' that features all manner of mash-ups including Bowie vs KRS-One and even Rihanna vs Lemmy and Mötörhead!

EYEPET

Yeah, pets can be fun, but you have to feed them, wipe up poo and generally look after them and stuff. Some of us have enough trouble looking after ourselves, so this bizarre (some may say creepy) concoction which uses the PlayStation Eye to allow you to interact with an ugly, monkey-gnome thing may find some appeal. It does look clever.

GRAN TURISMO 5

In dev longer than most real cars, engines have been gunning that we may actually see this before we all get rat-faced on the evening of December 31 (we wouldn't bet money though). They've finally put damage modelling in there, official WRC and NASCAR licenses plus *Top Gear*'s test track is playable, just to elicit extra drool.

SPLIT/SECOND

What do you get if you cross the *Burnout* series with *Smash TV* and the movie *Death Race*, then chuck in a little *Red Faction: Guerrilla*-style mass destruction? Well, that's basically the mission statement for *Split/Second*, from the guys behind the underappreciated *Pure*, so if they nail it then we'll be in for a nitrous high later this year.

THE LAST GUARDIAN

All we have to say is that this is the next game from Team Ico, those behind *Shadow of the Colossus* and, of course, *Ico*. You want to know more? Ok, we can mention that director Fumito Ueda has declared that this will share elements with its predecessors and be about a boy and his massive, oft-wayward mouse-eagle buddy.

SIMPLY THE BEST...

The best of the best of the best of the *best*

ADVENTURE



GRAND THEFT AUTO IV

"GTAIV is a game 10 out of 10 was designed for – a game that takes your rising, constantly spiralling expectations and vapourises them with a product so sublime you'll tell your grandkids about it."

DEVELOPER: Rockstar North PUBLISHER: Rockstar PLAYERS: 1-16

10



UNCHARTED: DRAKE'S FORTUNE

"The only bad thing about it is it ends, but hot damn it takes you on a transcendently enjoyable ride. There's no reason why you shouldn't buy this game."

DEVELOPER: Naughty Dog PUBLISHER: Sony PLAYERS: 1

10



RED FACTION GUERRILLA

"Turning destruction in to an art form, *Red Faction Guerrilla* is a sandbox experience of the highest calibre. A credible physics package creates loads of 'must see' moments, making this a game you didn't even know you wanted."

DEVELOPER: Volition PUBLISHER: THQ PLAYERS: 1-16

9



LITTLE BIGPLANET

"By rejigging the traditional platformer with physics and an accessible level creator, *LittleBigPlanet* becomes something delightfully simple and postmodern – a game that everyone can play, and endlessly recreate."

DEVELOPER: Media Molecule PUBLISHER: Sony PLAYERS: 1-4

10



DEAD SPACE

"The best survival horror title this generation – by an absolute country mile. *Dead Space* combines a smart story with incredible visuals, sound design to create what is arguably the scariest video game ever made. A must-play on every possible level."

DEVELOPER: Visceral Games PUBLISHER: EA PLAYERS: 1

9



MGS4: GUNS OF THE PATRIOTS

"An incredibly layered gaming experience that is almost inexhaustible. One of the best games available on the PlayStation 3, and definitely one of the top exclusives. Buy and play this videogame now."

DEVELOPER: Kojima Productions PUBLISHER: Atari PLAYERS: 1-16

10



INFAMOUS

"The city you explore, the game mechanics, the story, presentation, music and interface all conspire to play silly buggers with your perceptions of what video gaming is all about. Good for at least two playthroughs, the choice to use your superpowers for good or evil is, literally, in your hands."

DEVELOPER: Sucker Punch PUBLISHER: Sony PLAYERS: 1

9



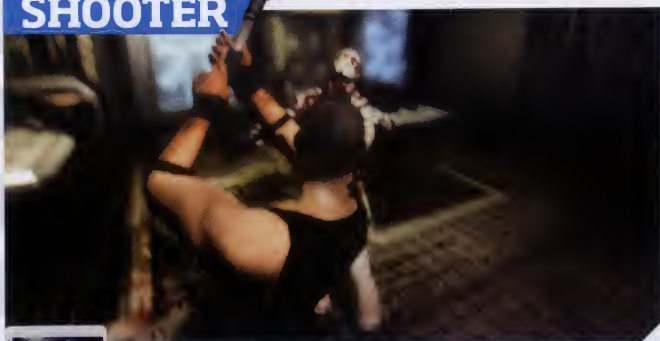
FALLOUT 3

"Taking the solid base of *Oblivion* and placing into a post apocalyptic wasteland always sounded like a great idea – and *Fallout 3* proves that concept brilliantly. This is a game that will astound you with the sheer depth and enormity of its incredible vision."

DEVELOPER: Bethesda PUBLISHER: Atari PLAYERS: 1

9

SHOOTER



THE CHRONICLES OF RIDDICK: ASSAULT ON DARK ATHENA

"Worth your sweat. The combination of two campaigns equals a respectable 20+ hours of gameplay. A must for those wanting something moody and fresh."

DEVELOPER: Starbreeze Studios PUBLISHER: Atari PLAYERS: 1-12

8



KILLZONE 2

"Visually *Killzone 2* runs through the competition like a bull in the

proverbial china shop. Lucky then, that the game's design and story matches the lofty production values. *Killzone 2* is the first-person shooter evolved."

DEVELOPER: Guerrilla
PUBLISHER: Sony
PLAYERS: 1-16

10



BIOSHOCK

"As a sub-par port, minus the promised extra content, *BioShock* is a disappointment. BUT you'd be silly to miss out on what is undoubtedly one of the landmark games of this generation so far. In many ways, this is a must play."

DEVELOPER: 2K Marin
PUBLISHER: 2K
PLAYERS: 1

8



CALL OF DUTY 4: MODERN WARFARE

"A fantastic shooter with a dizzying array of combat scenarios and packed with bleeding-edge military hardware. *COD4* is one of the tightest shooters we've ever played."

DEVELOPER: Infinity Ward PUBLISHER: Activision PLAYERS: 1-16

10



WARHAWK

"Tighter than a bull's arse on fight night and smoother than a glass of Guinness, *Warhawk* is a seriously superior piece of software. Multiplayer only, but you'd be barking mad to miss it."

DEVELOPER: Incognito
PUBLISHER: Sony
PLAYERS: 1-32

9



THE ORANGE BOX

"*The Orange Box* is ripe, in season, and packed with vitamin value. With five quality titles, including the sublime *Portal*, there truly is something here for everybody. An unmissable package."

DEVELOPER: Valve
PUBLISHER: EA
PLAYERS: 1-16

9



CALL OF DUTY: WORLD AT WAR

"Superior in many ways to even *Modern Warfare*, this is a surprisingly superlative piece of software. Powerful, well-produced, stuffed with violence – it's fantastic. The action is relentless, the visuals buttery-smooth, the intensity savage – we love it."

DEVELOPER: Treyarch
PUBLISHER: Activision
PLAYERS: 1-16

10



GHOST-BUSTERS

"Well-honed and accessible controls, some spectacular visual effects, excellent pace, great level design, incredible attention to detail – all of these essential traits combined with the *Ghostbusters* universe and come together for a thoroughly addictive experience."

DEVELOPER: Terminal Reality
PUBLISHER: Sony
PLAYERS: 1-4

9



FAR CRY 2

"At times overstressing itself, *Far Cry 2*'s breath-taking ambition can often be its undoing, but it's still one of the best shooters out there. Plus, setting stuff on fire is still a ridiculous amount of fun."

DEVELOPER: Ubisoft Montreal
PUBLISHER: Ubisoft
PLAYERS: 1-16

8

TOP 5

GUYS WE WANT ON OUR SIDE



ALEC MASON (RED FACTION: GUERRILLA)

He's got chutzpah and smarts, a wicked way with machinery and enough engineering ability to know just what to blow up. Oh yeah, and a big mof hammer – wa-hey!



ALEX MERCER (PROTOTYPE)

A hyper-agile shapeshifter who absorbs enemies like a rogue Spongebob Squarepants and whose parkour skills make *Mirror's Edge*'s Faith look slack? Sign him up, ta.



COLE MacGRATH (INFAMOUS)

A bit of a no-brainer, this one – he can handle a bike, is built like a brick shithouse (YOU try surviving that kerboom!) and now the blighter's done become all electro-zappy.



NATHAN DRAKE (UNCHARTED: DRAKE'S FORTUNE)

He's flexible and can handle himself with guns, whips, chains... erm, and can look after himself sans weaponry too. If he wasn't on our side we'd hate his guts!



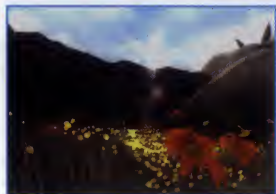
OLD (SOLID) SNAKE (MSG4: GUNS OF THE PATRIOTS)

A superb example of why you should think twice before dismissing the oldies, Snake may be rather grizzled nowadays, but he's still the stealthiest SOB around.

INDEX

All the games that matter on PS3!

MAGIC MOMENTS



GAME: Flower
CONSOLE: PS3
YEAR: 2009

THE MOMENT:

The brains behind *Flower* are those clever chaps who created *fIOW*, so by association it's got to be good, right?

Well yes, and no.

As it's quickly become a PSN fave, and probably the best demo of what the PS3's motion control can actually do, you likely have an idea what *Flower* is about. But for those who missed the cult, the 'plot' gratifies even the crustiest of hippies as you're a petal, floating on the breeze. Each level has a vague objective if you want – meaning Trophies – or otherwise you can just waft about like a flower child that's dropped more acid than an epileptic lab assistant.

So, what's the "no" about? Well, *Flower* has 14 trophies. The majority of them are easy enough to trip over or work towards, however there's one that's an absolute effing mother-scratching bastard to get, and it goes by the somewhat misleading name of 'Pure'.

You see, whilst five of the six levels (okay, seven if you count the end credits) in *Flower* aren't full of big, icky, hurty things, one of them is – level five, the purple flower level. This is where all the sweetness and light gets a size 12 Doc Marten up the bum in favour of dinginess, thunderstorms and electrified towers that if brushed send a major volt jolt through you, as well as making a zappy sound that can frighten you a vertical metre off the couch when you're in concentration mode. That 'Pure' trophy? Waft through level five unscathed – one zapination and you're potpourri. This would be fine if it weren't for the third stage, with the crumbling pylons, and the rapid erection pylons and the hurting and the... urk!

Many hours were whiled trying to beat it. Many approaches were tried, ranging from 'kamikaze pilot' to 'Mogadon OD'. Finally, however, a happy medium was struck and, after holding our breath for around three minutes as we stealthed our way along the left hand wall, we made it. WE MADE IT! "Bing!" goes the PS3 as the Trophy pops up. "CLUNK!" goes we as the stress is banished.

Damn those hippies, they really can be sadistic bastiches.



RACING



PURE

"Pure shot straight from nowhere to rub *MotorStorm*'s face in its glorious graphics and watertight gameplay. It's not as varied as its main competitor, but damn does it play well."

DEVELOPER: Black Rock **PUBLISHER:** Funtastic **PLAYERS:** 1-16

9



GRAN TURISMO 5: PROLOGUE

"An anemic game package that somehow survives by being what is quite possibly the greatest example of audio-visual excellence on the PlayStation 3 thus far. Well worth checking out."

DEVELOPER: Polyphony Digital
PUBLISHER: Sony
PLAYERS: 1-16

8



COLIN MCRAE: DIRT

"The great man rests in peace, but his legacy lives on with this stellar racer that brilliantly bridges the seemingly impenetrable gap between arcade and sim. A seamlessly presented title that juggles depth and accessibility with a precise gusto."

DEVELOPER: Codemasters
PUBLISHER: Atari
PLAYERS: 1-16

9



SEGA RALLY

"To appreciate *Sega Rally* you'll have to continually remind yourself that it's a deceptively life-like caricature of a hardcore rallying experience. Not brain surgery, but it delivers the fun in big muddy spades."

DEVELOPER: Sega Driving Studio
PUBLISHER: Sega
PLAYERS: 1-6

9



RACE DRIVER GRID

"This bastard rock n' roll son of V8 Supercars and *Colin McRae: Dirt* is hot. Your lower jaw will relax. Your eyelids will take five. And you'll start to drool. Shame it ditched its sim roots, but the missing in action V8 DLC has us all a quiver."

DEVELOPER: Codemasters
PUBLISHER: Atari
PLAYERS: 1-12

9



FERRARI CHALLENGE

"*Ferrari Challenge* will surprise you by being that little bit better than you thought it could ever be. A hardcore racing sim that thrives on the details, this is a suitable title to fend off the petrol heads until *Gran Turismo 5* arrives to rewrite the racing handbook."

DEVELOPER: System 3
PUBLISHER: Red Ant
PLAYERS: 1-16

8



MOTORSTORM

"In our humble opinion *MotorStorm* was the best launch title on the fledgling PS3 – and arguably it's one of the greatest launch titles of all time. Defining next-gen racing as a platform upon which smart AI and terrain deformation could thrive, *MotorStorm* reinvented the arcade racer."

DEVELOPER: Evolution Studios
PUBLISHER: Sony
PLAYERS: 1-16

10



MIDNIGHT CLUB: LOS ANGELES

"Within its niche sub-genre, *MC: LA* reigns supreme. Well designed, rolling objectives, and an insane amount of customisation, *MC: LA* manages to rise above the rabble, easily beating off *Need for Speed Underground* at its own game."

DEVELOPER: Rockstar San Diego
PUBLISHER: Rockstar
PLAYERS: 1-16

7



BURNOUT PARADISE

"You'll lament the thoughtless removal of splitscreen and the lack of a retry button, but you'll marvel at the slick frame rate, the sun drenched city, and Criterion's stellar commitment to free downloadable content. Awesome."

DEVELOPER: Criterion
PUBLISHER: EA
PLAYERS: 1-16

9

MUSIC & SPORTS



ROCK BAND

"A triumph. Harmonix has found the formula for a truly great music game – immaculate presentation, great tunes and a job for as many of your friends as possible. You wanted the best, you got the best."

DEVELOPER: Harmonix PUBLISHER: EA PLAYERS: 1-4

10



TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 09

"Golf, for most of the populace, is about as exciting as watching paint dry in an old folk's home, so it's testament to EA that this game actually works well."

DEVELOPER: EA
PUBLISHER: EA
PLAYERS: 1-16

8



SKATE 2

"Despite some frame rate issues, *SKATE 2* is undoubtedly one of the greatest sports game's ever conceived. The controls are flawless, the city is dense, the balance is sublime. Massively addictive."

DEVELOPER: EA Black Box
PUBLISHER: EA
PLAYERS: 1-8

9



FIFA 09

"With it's new momentum physics, stellar visuals, and engaging gameplay, 2009 is finally the year that the *FIFA* franchise manages to leap the perennial hurdle that is *Pro Evolution Soccer*. Now Konami have to play catch up."

DEVELOPER: EA Canada
PUBLISHER: EA
PLAYERS: 1-20

9



STREET FIGHTER IV

"Capcom has been in the virtual brawling business longer than anyone, and with its vibrant look, online mode and pristine gameplay, *SFIV* is worth paying double for. Acquire on sight."

DEVELOPER: Capcom PUBLISHER: THQ PLAYERS: 1-2

10



NBA 2K9

"Basketball's hardly the national sport of Australia, but that doesn't mean that the game can't be fun. This is a decent representation of Barack Obama's favourite sport. Fans of basketball should check this out."

DEVELOPER: 2K
DISTRIBUTOR: 2K
PLAYERS: 1-10

7



GUITAR HERO METALLICA

"*Guitar Hero Metallica* improves upon *GHWT* in a number ways – a more user-friendly HUD, superior presentation and more attention to detail. Great tracklist too, including 'Tuesday's Gone' by Lynyrd Skynyrd."

DEVELOPER: Neversoft
DISTRIBUTOR: Activision
PLAYERS: 1-4

8



FIGHT NIGHT ROUND 4

"A spectacular game. Deeper and more technical, *Fight Night Round 4* recreates the sweet science more faithfully than ever before. Remarkable detail, incredible animation."

DEVELOPER: EA Canada
PUBLISHER: EA
PLAYERS: 1-2

9



TOP 5

PSN PS3 PUZZLERS



CUBOID

Everyone understands blocks. There's not much to get really. Blocks are a gaming staple; here you actually play as one, in a brilliantly bastardised riff on *Jenga* with mucho added strategy.



ECHOCROME

Minimalism goes all Escher-tastic in this often brain-mauling monochromatic wireframe romp where you mess with the reality of the world by moving the camera about.



PUZZLE QUEST: GALACTRIX

The *Bejeweled* remix is almost a genre to itself, but this one combines matching coloured gems with a space theme, RPG elements and matching on six axes.



TRASH PANIC

Tetris goes all 'let's-hug-the-environment', as you collect all manner of crap in bins, using physics to crush the contents so that you can fit more crud in.



ZEN PINBALL

Okay, not strictly a puzzler, but as it's kind of an orphan category-wise we're sticking it in here, 'cause this collection of four tables for about \$13 is both ace fun and a total bargain.



VIRTUA TENNIS 2009

"More of a tweak than a brand new experience, *Virtua Tennis 2009* is still the most enjoyable tennis game available today. Along with player creation tools, the biggest plus is the chance to play in the Davis Cup."

DEVELOPER: Sumo
DISTRIBUTOR: SEGA
PLAYERS: 1-4

8



SINGSTAR

"Take *SingStar* for what it is: a sublimely developed party game that cruelly exploits drunken girls and deludes them into believing they are 'SingStars'. Perfectly presented, and endlessly fun post-booze-fest."

DEVELOPER: Sony
DISTRIBUTOR: Sony
PLAYERS: 1-4

8

INFAMOUS

Aggressive Inline



2002

AGGRESSIVE INLINE

"They see me rollin', they hatin'..."

They say the hardest thing about rollerblading is telling your parents that you're gay. In fact, that hardest thing about it these days is probably getting paid to do it. The rise and fall of inline skating took little over a decade, all too vividly illustrated from its 10-year run in the X Games. Aggressive inline skating was introduced to the X Games in 1995 and dropped in 2005 due to slumping popularity.

Aggressive Inline, then, should've been a bit of a joke. A *Tony Hawk* rip-off using a sport infinitely less cool than skateboarding as its foundation. But it wasn't. *Aggressive Inline* was instead a unique, innovative and remarkably fun extreme sports game. It was as good as anything else out there – and when that anything else is *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3* you know you're doing something right.

The levels themselves weren't just cleverly crafted; they were absolutely huge and filled to bursting point with objectives. It sailed along at a silky 60 frames per second. The control system was a comfortable hybrid of *Tony Hawk* and *Dave Mirra*, and it was tighter than a crab's arsehole. There was even an organic levelling-up system where the player could increase their character's skills in certain areas by using them often. It was a truly addictive game, one you could happily play for weeks on end thanks to its satisfying progression system, challenging goals, and a ton of other options.

The game received a stack of kudos for all this and more, surprising reviewers the world over. But mega-success never came, and nor did a sequel.

Z-Axis was acquired by Activision in May 2002, about two months before *Aggressive Inline* was released through Acclaim. It's entirely possible that this move was purely designed to yank a blossoming developer of extreme sports titles out of the picture. Despite solid work on the *Dave Mirra* series and high praise for *Thrasher: Skate & Destroy* and *Aggressive Inline*, Z-Axis wasn't put to work on anything

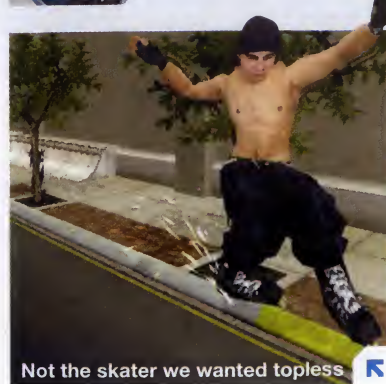
of the sort at Activision. Z-Axis simply spent its time at Acti doing grunt work on *X-Men* games and porting titles developed by other studios, most recently the very brown and decidedly average *Enemy Territory: Quake Wars* for PS3.

In early 2008, the studio was renamed Underground Development and was set to expand, but shortly afterwards Activision announced it was actually closing it down. In the end, Z-Axis met the same fate as its best game. Despite its proven potential with extreme sports titles Z-Axis sank into obscurity and vanished. Likewise, despite the fact *Aggressive Inline* was a true breakthrough competitor to the *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater* series, it too faded away – joining the likes of *Thrasher: Skate & Destroy* and *Sunny Garcia Surfing* as great extreme sports games that never survived beyond their debuts. **— Luke Reilly**



INFO

CONSOLE: PS2
GENRE: SPORTS
DEVELOPER: Z-AXIS
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: USA
CURRENT APPROXIMATE PRICE: \$10 (EBAY)



GETTING JIGGLE WITH IT

Aggressive Inline features a number of professional inline skaters that no-one has ever heard of including Chris Edwards, Eito Yasutoko, Franky Morales, Jaren Grob and Taig Khiris. Contrary to what we assumed (and even though our dedicated team of researchers nearly gave up after finding hardly anybody featured in *Aggressive Inline* has a Wikipedia page) these guys still do this professionally. At any rate, our favourite skater in *Aggressive Inline* was the fictional Chrissy – her schoolgirl miniskirt that constantly flashed her undies and the developer's pioneering use of jiggle physics were too hard to resist.

THE CHICKEN STRIKES BACK ON DVD



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The most hotly-anticipated shooter ever is nearly here, and we've played it!

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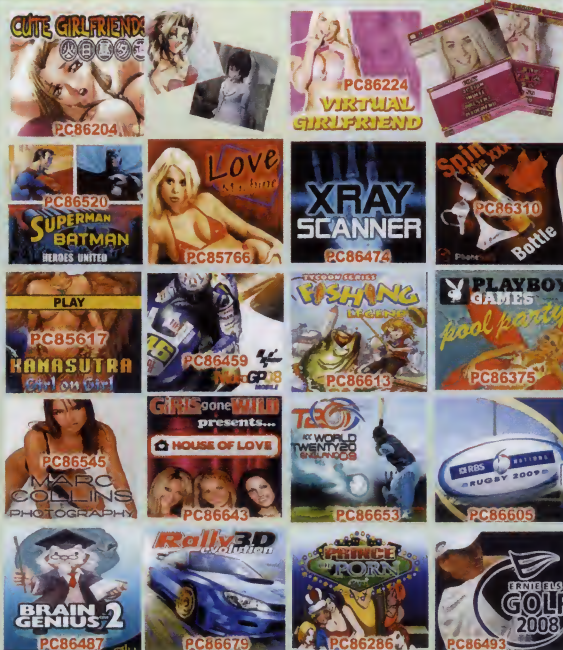


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AUSTRALIAN

ink

TATTOOS. STYLE. CULTURE.

**ISSUE 2
ON SALE
AUGUST 14**



NINJA THE TÈA PARTY'S OVER

Now comes the *Mini Ninja* tea party... erm... thing!

Ninjas – we just can't seem to get enough of them. In the '70s and '80s we had numerous films and games about them. In the '90s and '00s they became a sort of post modern and hip catchall like pirates (although ninjas are heaps cooler – pirates equal missing limbs, eye patches, scurvy and barely repressed homosexuality) but whether we treat our silent assassin pals with glib irony or jaw-dropping awe – they, like *The Dude*, abide.

Why, IO Interactive has a game called *Mini Ninjas* which combines the powers of, erm, being small and a ninja. So in celebration of this upcoming jaunt, join with us as we cast our mind back to the top 10 ninjas and why they lacked so much arse – very quietly.

1



THE TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES

It's all in the title; the raging hormones of adolescence, the DNA-tweaking mutation combined with ninja skills and that most unlikely of creatures: the turtle.

By jingo, how irreverent!

Based on comics, the turtles were turned into lunch boxes, video games and Saturday morning cartoons – as well as several live action and animated movies. Perhaps it is Michelangelo who says it best:

"Wise men say:

Forgiveness is divine but never pay full price for late pizza."

Right on, dude, right on.

2



DRAGONNINJA

No, these are not mutated dragons with desires to be ninja-tastic (although that's a pretty good idea for a really stupid movie, someone call Michael Bay!) rather they are an evil gang, antagonists of the game *Bad Dudes vs. DragonNinjas*. Just how evil are these ninjas? We can quantify it with ease: they've kidnapped "President Ronnie".

Why do these silent warriors want to kidnap that right-wing, senile, Republican nut job? Such is the mystery of the *DragonNinja*. All shallow, caustic humour aside this was actually a pretty sweet game for its time. The "Bad Dudes" wore fingerless gloves and tank tops. Thus putting them in the "not bad meaning bad, but bad meaning good." column. The '80s... a confusing time.

3



THOMAS (OF THE 1985 NES GAME KUNG FU)

Thomas was an unlikely ninja hero. He wasn't masked, he didn't get about with a big shiny sword and his quest – to save his missus Sylvia from a rival gang – was decidedly Super Mario Bros-ey. However Thomas with just punch, kick, jump and jump kick managed to best dozens of foes. Was he concentrating his Chi? Perhaps. That and the fact his enemies would tend to walk towards him, basically asking for a swift ninja-style knock to the noggin'. Still for a bloke named Thomas he was quite the minimalist ninja.

4

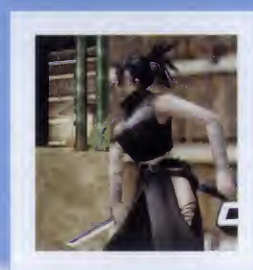


SHINOBI

From extremely humble, 20 cent swallowing beginnings (the game, not the ninja!) Shinobi's hero (Joe) was less of the stealth more of the throw ninja stars, hack and slash your enemies in well lit areas and jump a lot school of ninja.

Actually *Shinobi* was the game that introduced many a tyke to the very concept of a ninja. All decked out in classic ninja clobber, he – and the game series that slowly went from classic to crap-sick – basically sent the benchmark for all ninja games to follow or totally ignore. Like the next one...

5

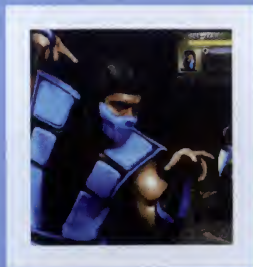


THE TENCHU SERIES NINJAS

The *Tenchu* series has gone from pretty good to horrible and back again. One thing it does have in its plus column is the sense of stealth. This feels somewhat authentic.

You come up behind people and slit their throat, or distract them and push them off a cliff or poison their saki. Such is, apparently, the way of the ninja. They're quiet, they kill people and they wear pyjamas... and are kind of dicks. Come on! You don't poison a man's saki!

6



SUB-ZERO FROM MORTAL KOMBAT

There are three things mankind can depend on. Death, taxes and Sub-Zero appearing in a *Mortal Kombat* franchise game. He even had his own game which we've blocked out of our minds. It was shit.

Why is Sub-Zero so groovy? Well, he's quite literally cool, can turn you into an ice sculpture and his eyes have a kind of desperate madness and longing in them. Trust us, look at those angry orbs and like Scorpion you'll want to give him a come hither gesture and say: "Get over here!"

[sound of crickets chirping]

You know what? Screw you guys.

7



AMERICAN NINJA

Going into the world of film for just a quick moment here, any discussion of ninjas or ninja-related products would be woefully incomplete without Michael Dudikoff's Academy Award nominated (probably) performance as the "American Ninja". Many sequels followed and many youngsters grew up thinking ninja were actually like this.

Oh sure, sit there with this glossy magazine in your hands and snigger at how things, "used to be" – but trip off this home boy: the original *American Ninja* movie alone made over \$10million in the United States.

Just think about that. But not for too long. We started weeping.

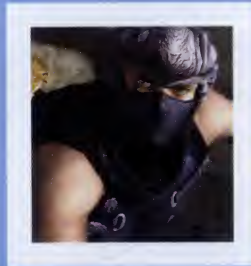
8



STRIDER AND HIS BIG SWORD

Strider was a pretty sweet game. You could climb on stuff, do what passed for acrobatics back then and you had this sword that, after hitting anything for long enough, would make it explode. Seriously, you could have hit ice cream with Strider's sword and eventually *that* would explode (as seen in the fairly unpopular *Strider vs. Rocky Road*).

9



NINJA GAIDEN (AKA: GAY DAN)

Yeah, *Ninja Gaiden* has been in a few games but it's really *Ninja Gaiden Sigma* for the PS3 that gets mentions here. See, this humble keyboard monkey had to do a playguide on that bastard, mongrel of a game. Easy money, right?

Wrong!

The punishing difficulty level on normal led to three long weekends where drinking scotch and coffee and tag teaming the bloody game with a friend eventually led to success. Eventually.

It wasn't even that great a game, although it has to be said Gay Dan was one hell of a ninja. What's that? They didn't release the sequel for PS3? GOOD! Next!

10



GRAY FOX AKA: THE CYBORG NINJA

Hey, remember when the game time in the *Metal Gear Solid* series outweighed the bloody cut scenes? Back in *Metal Gear Solid* – on the PSone – we had the good fortune to witness the cyborg ninja as he hacked and slashed his way through a whole bunch of soldiers.

Then Snake – young, non-pontificating Snake – gets to kick his arse. Admittedly everyone who died did so after delivering a monologue, but nowhere near the *MGS4* length. Part cyborg/part ninja = all kick arse.



MINI NINJAS

From what we've seen the new *Mini Ninjas* game takes the odd route of combining ninja with cute – but hell, every other combination seems to be taken so it's just crazy enough to work. We'll have a review fresh and ready as soon as we gets our crazy paws on it. **Anthony O'Connor**

TEKKEN

A LOOK BACK

In preparation for the latest instalment of this venerable kicky-punchy series, we take a nostalgic gander at the previous incarnations - the highs, the lows and those bloody Panda Bears. Seriously, Pandas?!



TEKKEN
YEAR: 1994/5
SYSTEM: PSone

Those of you who were known to 'play the pinnies' around the mid to late '90s probably got their first look at *Tekken* in an 'amusement arcade'.

These were strange places, readers. Usually bereft of any form of genuine amusement. Oddly-shaped potato people would hand out change, the air smelt like under-the-doona farts and luncheon meat and the floors were always sticky.

Always.

Not the best location to experience this ambitious fighter, so it was rather pleasing when we managed to snag it for the PSone in 1995.

Tekken translates to 'Iron Fist' and managed to have a plot that was at once convoluted yet incredibly shallow and, well, silly. Then again you don't go to a strip club for the burgers and you don't play *Tekken* for the plot.



TEKKEN 2
YEAR: 1996
SYSTEM: PSone

The other big contender at the time was *Virtua Fighter* (whose run started a bit before *Tekken*) but *Tekken* was gathering a head of steam: as well as being one of the most played arcade games, it was also pulling in nines and 10s in the review stakes.

To be honest, *Tekken 2* wasn't much of a sequel so much as a graphically superior version of the first one. The characters were the same (although Jack was now Jack-2) and the PSone version contained elements not available in the arcade version, but this was more of the same. Good, but not great.

It certainly didn't prepare gamers, journo and arcade hounds for the next Iron Fisting - not even a little bit...



TEKKEN 3
YEAR: 1998
SYSTEM: PSone

Like a painted Megadeth or Slayer album cover, *Tekken 3* had a strong visual style, memorable iconography and Satan!

Rather than scrap the existing game engine, *Tekken 3* tweaked, polished and improved on what they had. A common complaint with the previous *Tekkens* was that it played like a 2D fighter and characters could just jump all over the shop like prancing idiots, often winning by fluke rather than any genuine skill.

Tekken 3 introduced both literal and figurative depth into the proceedings. You could now move into and out of the background, effectively sidestepping - allowing more escapes from button mashers. Also, although the jumping was toned down, it became more realistic - recovery from knock-downs was improved and for the first time we had combo throws.

That would have been enough to impress the most jaded fighter fan but *Tekken 3* added 15 new characters and even featured two other modes of play.

Over the past decade *Tekken 3* has weaseled its way into many top games "of all time" lists, occasionally even cracking top five. It's also one of the very few games to have received a perfect score in *Edge*. With over 1000 attack moves it's easy to see why.

SOME OTHER STUFF WE'D LIKE TO SAY

* Panda bears, reptiles, blocks of wood and friggen' kangaroos are stupid in fighting games. Sorry, but it had to be said

* *Tekken Advance* was released on the Gameboy Advance, and another one called *Tekken Card Challenge* was released on handheld platform the WonderSwan

* After the slight letdown of *Soulcalibur IV* we're looking for the definitive fighter – odds on *Tekken 6* will be it

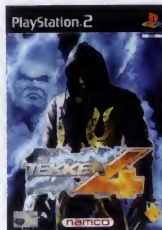


TEKKEN TAG TOURNAMENT

YEAR: 2000
SYSTEM: PS2

A lot of people, especially long term fans of the series, belittled *Tekken Tag Tournament* but frankly we don't know why. Perhaps it's because this title isn't part of the official canon, but frankly said story was beginning to become the same incomprehensible mess that *Metal Gear Solid* has become (seriously, does anyone know what's going on in those games?)

TTT has so much going for it. Improved PS2 graphics and a tag system which you did not have to implement – although it was encouraged. Team Battle modes seem to have fallen out of favour of late – why? It also boasted 39 playable characters – that's the largest roster until *Tekken 6*. *Tekken* snobs be buggered, *TTT* is a worthy addition albeit utterly plotless. Interestingly *TTT* experienced a resurgence in popularity around 2007 when various game media outlets placed it in the top 25 PS2 games – and quite right too.



TEKKEN 4

YEAR: 2002
SYSTEM: PS2

TT and *Tekken 4* proved to be the most divisive of the lot.

Whereas *TTT* was fast-paced with fluid strings of powerful combos, *Tekken 4* spent extra time detailing the graphics and backgrounds and made the fighting much more tactical. Those who'd bashed *TTT* had the game they wanted: a fighting game with counter strikes, environmental damage and a continuation of the story.

That said it certainly wasn't the pick-up-and-play game *TTT* was and the reviews reflected this. Also certain collision detection issues marred what should have been a good time. This was the game that birthed the *Tekken* snob, but really, it was a bit of a step back.



TEKKEN 5

YEAR: 2005
SYSTEM: PS2

Pub arguments were stopped, "my game's better than your game" hate ended and everyone had to agree that *Tekken 5* was back-

to-basics *Tekken* the way it should be.

Loads of modes, including retro gaming where you can fight in ye olde *Tekken* matches *Tekken 5* has some of the best graphics on the PS2 ever. This was the last PS2 *Tekken* and it was great to see it go out on such a high note. But wait, what's that?!



TEKKEN 5: DARK RESURRECTION

YEAR: 2006
SYSTEM: PSP, PS3

Anyone stating that a PSP *Tekken* would be improved and ported to the PS3 before 2006 would have been accused

of suffering from a case of the dreaded brain worms, yet that's exactly what happened. An utterly astonishing PSP title, *Dark Resurrection* was given a polish up and made available for the PS3. This new title combined the counter attacks and power bars with fast-moving, beautiful graphics and then when the PS3 took it online... well, things couldn't get any better. Could they?

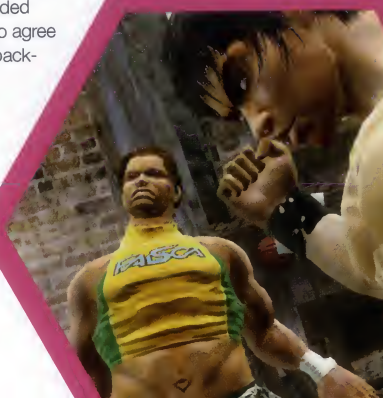


TEKKEN 6: BLOODLINE REBELLION

YEAR: 2009 (2007 in arcades)
SYSTEM: PS3, PSP

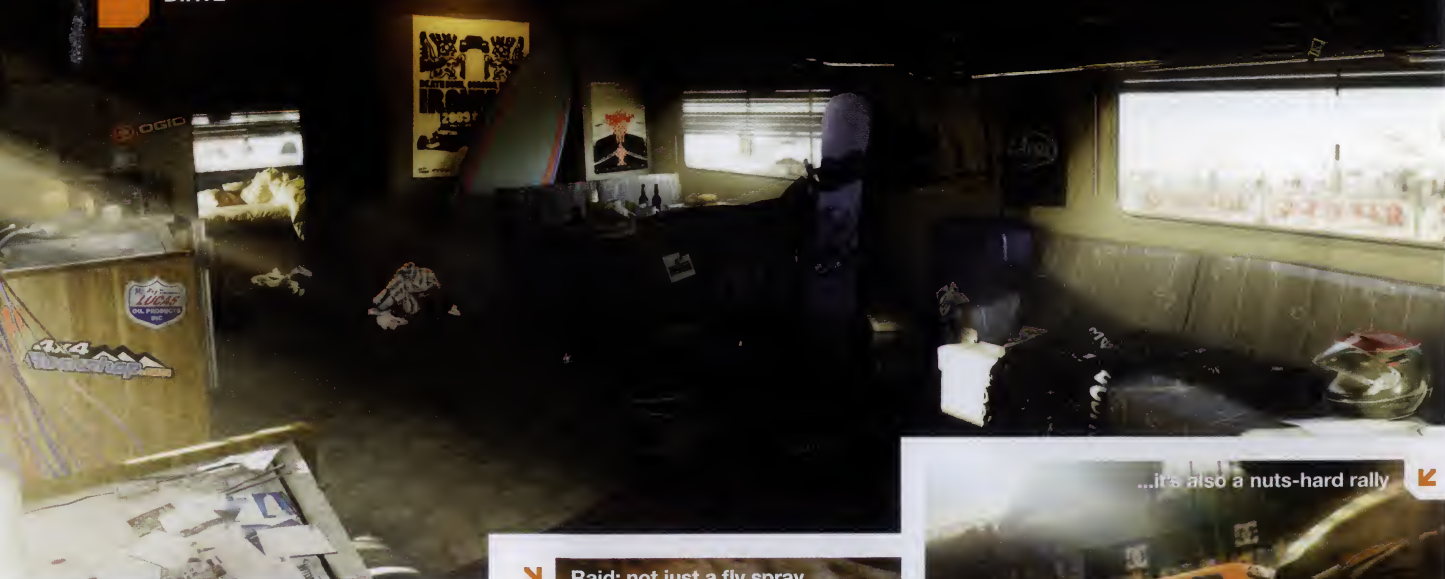
Taking the framework of the arcade game, 42 playable characters, utilising the frame blur, the bouncing attack effect and destructible environments you can break, fall down or throw your enemies through, *Tekken 6* looks like it's destined to be bloody marvellous. The arcade game's a cracker so combine that with the extra console characters, the game's rage meter (that gives you that extra bit of power before you go down) plus a Campaign mode that has two player co-op and looks half decent.

Bring it on, say we, and bring it fast!



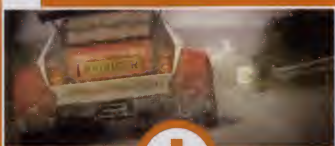
INCOMING

DIRT2



IT'S LIKE...

DIRT



Stars and stripes

Raid: not just a fly spray...



...it's also a nuts-hard rally



PS3 GENRE: RACING | RELEASE: SEPTEMBER | DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS | DEVELOPER: CODEMASTERS

DIRT 2

Filth is your friend

Reinventing the racing wheel isn't an easy thing to do. Codemasters' history shows that it's capable of tweaking it, though. Over the last 11 years, the reputation of its *Colin McRae* series for sublime handling has grown, and 2007's *DIRT* showed it was comfortable with tackling other equally slippery disciplines as well as rallying. The man himself, who, 12 days before the game hit the shelves, sadly died in a helicopter accident in 2007, diversified his talents and entered motorsports other than the WRC. He took part in the Dakar Rally Raid in both 2004 and 2005 along with, critically for *DIRT 2*, the X Games XIII in the States. McRae, we should note, was also making an attempt to re-enter the WRC. *DIRT 2*, the seventh game to bear his name, embraces McRae's shift to the world of extreme sports and other (mostly sideways) vehicles with fervour. *DIRT* swept the track with buggies, rally raid vehicles and trucks.

Fellow X Gamers Travis Pastrana (whose voice you heard in *DIRT*), DC Shoes founder Ken Block and Dave Mirra – yep, the BMX champ – feature as competitors. Their presence on paper sounds anomalous yet all have either been involved in the WRC itself or rallying in the States as part of the X Games – they

are legitimate competitors in a sport that is predominantly consisted of, and popular with, Europeans – where many drivers have a lineage into the sport or started rallying at an early age.

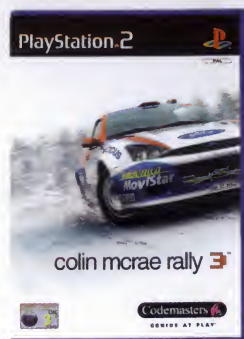
In *DIRT 2*, Pastrana et al all play a part in your ascension from no-name nobody to the top of the rally leaderboards, whether they're telling you about the newest race that's opened up, giving feedback or trash talk during a race. At the start of the game you're given McRae's Subaru Impreza that he used in the X Games and introduced to the RV; your home as you

you travel the world. It, at first, is a dingy and squalid tin-can, but your progression throughout the game will alter its appearance based on how fair and slick you are during each race, as well as the friends you make. Shunt a competitor and their opinion of you will drop. Pass them fluidly and it will increase instead.

Like *DIRT*, a strict tour of one country at a time is disposed of in favour of mini-events, though this time it's thematically tied together by the X Games setting rather than *DIRT*'s pyramid structure. The world map, laid out on a

COLIN-OSCOPY

McRae's car, the Subaru Impreza, which appeared on the cover of the first game and *Colin McRae 2005*, has been around for the last 16 years and both it and McRae



“Doors, spoilers and bumpers are the first casualties in the scrap between car and cliff face”

Bags not cleaning it



The scenery is truly breathtaking



Cars become coated with more dust and gravel as the race progresses

table in the RV, shows you each new event as it becomes available based on the amount of XP you've racked up. Pick a location and car and you're there. It's certainly more accessible for beginners to jump in to, while fans of a certain type of event can pick out their favourite and start racing.

Many of the events that we've played are either a race against a pack of competitors, or

(like a rally) a staggered start. The clock is still the number one target to beat for a spot on the podium in a rally, however if a competitor spins out, breaks down or just plain crashes, you'll pass them as they lay stricken on the side of the road. We're glad that they're prone to mistakes, as wheel-to-wheel racing is tight. However, the difficulty levels in the build we played needs a tweak; some stages on the

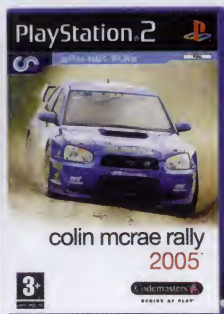
easiest setting are impossible to place better than fourth.

Taking a mechanic from its other racing title, *GRID*, Codemasters has implemented its flashback system to correct your own critical mistakes. Limited in number and dependent on the difficulty level you choose, hitting a button will initiate a replay of the last five or six seconds of the race allowing you to pick the spot where you want to precisely retry that widow-making corner without clipping your six-figure machine. Replays also offer the chance to gawp at the lush graphics and damage model. Doors, spoilers and bumpers are the first casualties in the scrap between car and cliff face. Environmental destruction and effects are ramped up; as sunshine gently filters across the mountains and through the trees, the reflection from the bonnet or side panels is warped, courtesy of a rogue section of wall or side of a mountain that sheers off as the rear of the car gouges into and through it. Clumsily bouncing over a savage crest shakes the co-driver around, his clipboard and pace notes nearly smacking the dashboard. It's not that the cars are disobedient; veterans of the series will jump in and find it's slightly lighter and perhaps more forgiving under power than *DIRT*. This is the ongoing result of 10 years as the rally leader; the racing wheel, it seems, isn't as round as we once thought. **Paul Taylor**

WE SAY

- ↑ Lush graphics
- ↑ Awesome sound
- ↓ McRae isn't here to see it

OPS IS...
About to hit a flying finish



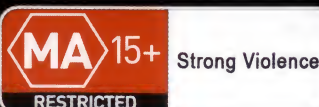
gave Subaru three consecutive manufacturers titles in the late '90s before he joined Ford and raced their Focus from 1999 to 2002 (*Colin McRae 2.0* and *Colin McRae Rally 3*). He switched to Citroen in 2003 (*Colin McRae 3*) – his last full year in the WRC. It's a testament to the man's career that two more dedicated rally games (2004 and 2005) bearing his name were made.

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